

2016

Reconfiguring Democracy and the Purpose of Higher Education in China

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Reconfiguring Democracy and the Purpose of Higher Education in China

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctorate in Public Administration

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

June 2016

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Acknowledgement

My academic pursuit, both in China and the United States, is a journey of life inquiry about things I care, a world I want to make meaning with, and a belief that I can make a change.

I will not be able to go so far without my family's love and support. Through their own way of living, my grandma, my aunt, my parents, and other family members taught me the fundamental importance and pleasure of being a good person. They shared stories with me and made me an important part of the continued family narrative. From them, I first learned how to relate myself to others and enrich life meaning through mutual obligation and dependence.

Especially, I want to thank my mother for her radical influence on me. Among so many great things, she taught me a belief in ultimate social justice—never yielding to any external force (like an authority, hardship, or power) that went against my will. Opposite to the traditional golden way of silence for self-preservation, she was fearless in speaking out and pursuing justice as her best. She also taught me the power of self-sufficiency, “To strike the iron, you need to develop your own muscles”. She encouraged me with her optimism and openness to new learning, as she said “Never hesitate to make the choice. There is always a way out once you make the first step”. I grew up with a belief in the power of will and a special mission in my life—to make it better. She is my source of strength and inspiration.

I want to thank my committee members, Jim Scheibel, Harry Boyte, and Peter Levine, for their time and efforts spent in supervising my work. With their inspiration and encouragement, I am able to follow a non-traditional approach to writing this dissertation, focus on original work, and develop my own theory. It is my great honor to work with them.

Specially, I want to express my deepest appreciation to Harry Boyte, who guides me to transform my passion and belief into solid democratic thinking. This dissertation starts with my weekly discussions with Harry during my two-semester independent study with him. Harry is particularly patient and strategic in supervising my research. In our ninety-minute long conversations, he carefully listens to what I am trying to explain, my confusion and my yearning, and tactically guides me how to relate problems of American and world politics to the problems

that I want to address in Chinese society. He recommends me to read important works of democracy written by different authors and generously provides me those materials. In Chinese culture, Harry is my *bole* (伯乐), a talent scout of my academic pursuit. He convinces me of the significance of my current and future work and inspires me with his own work in education and democracy.

I am greatly indebted to Jim Scheibel, who is a great support to my academic achievement in American society. He introduces me the concept of civic engagement and various opportunities to get involved both inside and outside the campus. These real-world experiences help me consolidate theories and stay sharp in analysis. Jim is also a mentor of my professional development. As a role model, he influences me with his leadership and virtue of being humble. From him, I learned how to organize study and life, manage time, and deal with stress. There is a difficult time when I write this dissertation, and Jim provides me valuable suggestions and great support to move ahead. Without him, I could not complete this work.

I have greatly benefited from Summer Institute of Civic Studies at Tufts University, facilitated by Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. From this two-week intensive intellectual discussions facilitated by Peter Levine and Karol Soltan, I have learned so much from civic leaders, advanced practitioners, and scholars from different parts of the world, and was able to develop a theoretical lens to examine Chinese culture and tradition as the civic foundation to redefine meanings of democracy and the purpose of higher education. Peter inspires me with his philosophical and innovative thinking, his spirit as a democratic pioneer, his work in democracy, and his way of empowering students.

Pursuing my doctorate degree in America, I am grateful to those who have supported my growth and influenced me with their role as an educator and those who kindly helped me, Tom Walkington, Nancy Victorin-Vangerud, Javier Gutierrez, Jane Krentz, Becky Yin, and those whose names are not mentioned here.

Abstract

This dissertation reconfigures Chinese democracy and the purpose of higher education through a conversation of its tradition, culture, and modern challenges in the context of civic studies, a new academic discipline focusing on civic renewal and citizens' role as co-creators for a better society. Through analyzing the affinities between the Confucian tradition, Dewey's communitarian form of democracy, the Chinese socialist tradition and public work, this dissertation explores the civic foundation for constructing Chinese democracy as collective agency. Recasting the "China Dream" as a collective work, it highlights important possibilities of developing civic professionals as the transformative force in modern China and the urgency for restoring the democratic role of higher education. Using a case study of the Experiential English reform at the International School of Business, Yunnan University of Finance and Economics, this dissertation examines feasibility of creating free spaces as experiments of new democratic thinking and practices in a centralized education system.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	7
The Purpose of This Dissertation.....	12
Main Concepts	15
The Significance	17
Chapter One: The Confucian Tradition for Communitarian Democracy.....	20
The Rule of Humanity	24
The Nature of Being and Self-cultivation	29
Integration of Self-autonomy and Social Efficacy	32
Extension of the Self-sphere and Honor of Duty	36
Self-government and Confucian Democracy	40
Limitation.....	42
Chapter Two: The Civic Tradition in Socialist China	47
Public Work and Chairman Mao's Legacy	47
Collective Ownership and the People's Communes	48
Mao Zedong Thought and Civic Education	60
Civic Role Models of Socialist China.....	67
Lei Feng's spirit.	67
Zhang Haidi, new Lei Feng in the reform-era.....	70
The Socialist Civic Tradition in Summary	72
Conforming Politics versus Citizen Politics	81
Chapter Three: Civic Crisis and Moral Decline in Modern China	87
The Impact of the Consumer Culture.....	89
The Impact of the Consumer Culture on Higher Education	94
The Democratic Tradition of Education during the Awakening Era	97
The Diminishing Animating Spirit of Higher Education	102
Chapter Four: Civic Renewal and Development of Civic Professionals	109
The Concept of Civic Professionals.....	112
Three Dimensions of Developing Civic Professionals	120
Free spaces.	126
Chapter Five: Creating Free Spaces in a Hidden Curriculum— My Experience	134
The Experiential English Reform	138
Prelude.	139
Process	141
English corner	142
My teaching	145
<i>Experience</i> English magazine	148
The school administration.	151
Evaluation	152
Conclusion	153

Reference	156
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Introduction

There is a problematic and prevalent tendency both in political and academic worlds to view democracy as the voting right, the authority of people in a decision-making process. Josiah Ober (2008) points out “social choice dilemmas” associated with this “reductive definition” of democracy as “majority rule”. He contends: “If democracy as a political system is reducible to a decision mechanism based on a voting rule, and if that voting rule is inherently flawed as a political system, then democracy is inherently flawed as a political system.” Tracing the original Greek meaning of “democracy”, Ober analyzes the root of democracy, demos, a collective body, the people; and kratia, “the capability to do things in the public realm, to make things happen.” Thus, the original meaning of democracy is the people’s collective capacity of for a better society.

Similarly, Boyte (2016, March 15) argues that “The large meaning is hollowed out” in the “shriveled sense of ‘democracy’ in today’s public discussion”, where voting and other decision structures as tools substitute for the essence, which is the people’s power, capacities for collective actions. Observing for many years South Africa’s democracy and its new participatory structures established symbolically through the election of Nelson Mandela, Boyte points out that these new structures turn out to be “hollow” due to neglecting the ancient tradition of collective work—self-organized communal labors, which used to enable the people to develop a measure of control of the environment and create a stronger sense of the community. Boyte

defines democracy as agency, citizens' power, the capacity of people of all backgrounds to act to build a common life. Boyte develops the theory of public work, recognizing labor of the ordinary people as co-creators. Reviewing Danish folk school philosophy, "education for life", as the enlightenment of "Citizenship Education Program" in the American civil rights movement in 1960s, Boyte reinforces the crucial role of education— in and for democracy— as the "fostering sites of individual awakening and potential of all occupations to contribute to a flourishing society," as Danish philosophy Grundtvig emphasizes (as cited in Boyte, 2016, March 15).

"The shriveled definition" of democracy as "majority rule" provides little help in understanding democratic construction in Chinese society. China, with its authoritarian characteristic, is often regarded as a land sterile of university suffrage according to standards of traditional liberal societies, which are usually marked as Western democracy. Still, China surprises the world with the continuity of its five-thousand-year civilization, its endurance for the wreckage of wars and foreign invasions, its resilience of restoring from poverty and political turbulence of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, its steady economic growth in a global recession, and its unprecedented grandeur of Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. How can an authoritarian regime like China, lacking democracy in the eyes of some liberal strands of thought, is emerging as the world super power? What is the secret?

In fact, the concept of people's power as the foundation of governance and a thriving society is deeply ingrained in Chinese culture. In the Confucian tradition, a civil society, a society in harmony, is grounded on the moral capacity of the ruler and the people. Mencius explicates:" the common people are the most valuable in a nation; the land and the grain are the

next; and the sovereign is the lightest. Therefore, to gain the people's support is the way to become sage-king of a state" (as cited in Li, 2009, p. 382). Xunzi further analyzes a state's dependence on the power of its people in a famous saying: "The sage-king is like the boat and the people are just like the water, Water supports the boat but also sinks it" (as cited in Li, 2009, p. 382).

In Confucianism, governance by virtues is a better form than mechanic laws. If everyone cultivates moral virtues and lives in pride and honor of mutual obligations and dependence, a society does not need a law to rigidly regulate what an individual thinks and acts. Fundamentally, Confucius emphasizes an organic and spontaneous communal life, where people self-organize their daily life along the line of kinships and extended relationships. Through self-cultivation and practices, every individual, with refined personality and moral intelligence, develops capacities to reflect, think, and act in an interdependent social relationship. Therefore, in Confucianism grows a tradition of moral agency.

Confucius places ultimate importance in education for developing moral agency in people. The Great Learning, one of the Four Books of Confucianism, states that the way of great learning is "to let one's innate virtues shine forth, to renew the people, and to rest in the highest good" (as cited in Li, 2009, p. 395). At the heart of the purpose of the education are moral virtues and humanistic values. Based on The Great Learning, education should help individuals to strengthen their capacity of investigating the meaning and purpose of life and refine their dispositions for a balance in themselves, their family, the society, and the country—"an integrated relationship between moral uprightness and the social and political harmony of the

world”(Li, 2009).

In the socialist tradition, Chairman Mao theorizes politics of farmers and workers to recognize the power of the ordinary people as the fountain of revolution for a new democratic society. To fully use the advantage of collectivism and collaboration, the Chinese Community Party transforms traditional Confucian villages into the people’s communes, where local farmers learn to work with each other, share resources, integrate the general guidance from a higher-level administration into local circumstance and stewardship, and eventually overcome major threats, such as drought and flooding, that result in chronic poverty in their villages. Workers participate in all fields of government projects, ranging from road construction, textile manufacturing to the exploration of the wild north, aiming to develop impoverished China into an industrialized modern society. Chairman Mao greatly emphasizes people’s role as contributors and producers different from the subject in the Confucian tradition or consumers in capitalism. Acknowledging importance of empowering the ordinary people, especially the peasants, as the revolution base, Mao achieves his theoretical deviation and independence from Marxism that emphasizes the dictatorship of proletariat (the working class) formed in developed industrialized countries and from Lenin’s belief in the communist revolution led by an elite core of revolutionaries called the “vanguard” (Reimer, 2012).

In education, Chinese socialist society intensively promotes virtues of labor in relation to constructing the commonwealth. The purpose of education, at all levels, is shaped around the development of all-rounded talents to recognize the work of public-spirited individuals who will “do whatever they can” to contribute to constructing the spiritual and material life of the socialist

collective. Through honoring the work of all professions and releasing the power of the ordinary people, the first-generation leaders of CCP consolidate the concept of people's power as the foundation of democracy into a political theory, represented by Mao Zedong Thought.

Democracy in China, therefore, is collective agency, which enables China lifts millions of people out of poverty and reaches a golden time of a booming economy and civic engagement in 1980s.

However, after the crackdown of the Tiananmen Square movement in 1989, there is a long period of political sensibility that subdues public civic passion. Furthermore, under the prevalence of the consumer culture and experts-dominated politics, democratic life based on collective agency is receding in modern China. Farmers and workers have been marginalized into a living of cheaper labors, deprived of honor and pride of their social status. On one hand, China urgently needs collective efforts in coping with its critical social issues, rampant corruptions, food safety, environmental pollution, and the rising rate of kidnapping of children, just to name a few. On the other hand, the ordinary people have been estranged from political life and public affairs, since it is up to the experts to decide policies and provide formula to solve problems. The phrase "as the expert say" becomes an authoritative voice in deciding the right from the wrong, and, ironically, keeps losing public trust.

As the culture of collective agency withers away, higher education serves a narrow purpose of "training high-level professional manpower"(China Education Center Ltd., n.d.), which is, in fact, designed and programmed in accordance with the market need. Universities compete with each other to squeeze into the Project 211 and Project 985, the ranking system of Chinese universities, in order to receive more government appropriations. Standardized tests

become a dominant measurement of students' achievement and teachers' merit. Wakes (2016) sharply points out that the standardized test, as a "bureaucratic approach" to school education, pushes schools into a narrow pursuit of "'world-class' curriculum standards— spelled out in specific measurable learning activities—and high-stakes standardized achievement tests". "Schools are thus reduced to test-prep centers, relying on didactic or 'instructive' pedagogies in order to efficiently produce the objectives," contends Wakes.

As a result, important esthetic and moral elements of the Confucian tradition are missing, and yield to the rule of power and money due to the prevalence of social injustice, which, unfortunately, affect the "life inquiry" of the young generation, who tend to be a fervent fan of Apple products and numb in democratic thinking. Experts and education administrators denounce the moral decline and alienation of the young people, and reinforce political education that aims to improve the overall consciousness of young people. There is a dilemma between high expectations of experts and ineffectiveness of the education. China upholds the belief that the young people are the successors of a society. Considering the immense social challenges China is facing, it is utmost urgent to reform higher education to bring back its democratic role in developing potentials of every individual with different backgrounds.

The Purpose of This Dissertation

The resurgent discussion of democracy as people's power for collective actions provides a significant vantage in reconfiguring democracy in modern China in a period of bewilderment and dramatic social transition. This dissertation is a conversation of Chinese tradition and culture in the context of civic studies, a new academic discipline, "focusing on agency and citizens as

co-creators of communities at different scales.”(Boyte & Finders, 2016) Civic studies is an effort of civic renewal, “the movement to improve societies by engaging their citizens” (Tufts University, n.d.), to reverse the ominous trend of the shrinking meaning of democracy and disempowerment of people in a world dominated by the consumer culture and technocracy (Boyte & Finders). It can be regarded as expansion of John Dewey’s conception of democracy as way of life, where individuals and collectivities develop agency for a flourishing community (Boyte & Finders). For Dewey, “Education is critical to a democratic society and democracy is central to the educational enterprise” (as cited in Boyte & Finders). Civic studies aims to revitalize “activities school” of what Dewey promotes, in which students develop agency based on experiences (Boyte & Finders).

In 2013, I attended a two-week intensive seminar facilitated by Tisch College’s Summer Institute of Civic Studies at Tufts University. This seminar was intensive intellectual discussions, focusing heavily on theory, among international civic leaders, advanced practitioners, and scholars. It engaged participants in challenging discussions such as: “

- What kinds of citizens (if any) do good regimes need?
- What should such citizens know, believe, and do?
- What practices and institutional structures promote the right kinds of citizenship?
- What ought to be the relationships among empirical evidence, ethics, and strategy?” (Tufts University, n.d.)

Civic studies interweaves a comprehensive set of theories and disciplines, with which I am

able to develop a theoretical context to examine Chinese culture and tradition as the civic foundation to redefine meanings of democracy and the purpose of higher education in the modern era. Accordingly, my dissertation addresses following questions

What is the civic foundation for constructing democracy as collective agency in Chinese society?

What are civic challenges that modern China is facing? What are factors leading to the down-fall of its moral and civic morale?

What kind of citizens does modern China need to skillfully handle its social issues and construct a better society?

How does higher education revitalize its civic role to develop qualified citizens?

My dissertation adopts an expansive view of democracy as a way of life and recognizes a close relationship between moral interconnectedness and democracy, since both form a value context for a collective way of living and involve everyday life as the fundamental basis for developing agency through executing internalized values in reality. The first two chapters explore what civic treasures are in Chinese culture, with chapter one examining promising elements in the Confucian tradition in relation to the Dewey's communitarian form of democracy; and chapter two focusing on the affinities between the Chinese socialist tradition and public work. In chapter three, through analyzing enormous challenges brought out by prevalence of the consumer culture and social injustice that eat away the civic fabric of Chinese society, I argue for tremendous urgency to revitalize the tradition of collective agency. Chapter four recasts the "China Dream" as a collective work and highlights the important possibilities of civic

professionals, grounded in Chinese traditional and socialist philosophy and necessary for its future. In chapter five, I use my personal experience as a case study to illustrate the feasibility of creating free spaces as innovative experiments of democratic teaching and practices in a Chinese university.

Main Concepts

Main concepts of civic studies applied in this dissertation are agency, public work, civic professionals, and free spaces.

Agency is based on the root meaning of power, “to be able or can” (Boyte & Finders, 2016). It is the executive function defined by Stephanie Carson that one gradually develops to take a conscious control of one’s own thoughts, choices, and actions (as cited in Boyte, 2015, May 10). It is the capacity to act upon and change the external environment in a desirable way. The emphasis is consequentiality of one’s deliberate efforts as opposing to the passive role when one instrumentally responds to an imposed demand. In democracy, agency means citizens’ role as co-creators of a community and a larger society, rather than mere voters or volunteers. In a collective society, like China, where the mutuality of the self and the collective is culturally deep-seated, individuals develop agency through interdependent relationships and collaborative work. There is an emphasis of the collectiveness of agency, united efforts to achieve a common goal in Chinese culture.

The concept of public work originates from the tradition of communal labor practices, the self organized governance through reciprocal efforts between individuals, such as cultivating lands and building houses, and the collective work of digging the well and building a temple that

contribute to the wellbeing of a community (Manager, 1987). Public work includes joint efforts in preparing festivals and rituals that enrich life in a community (Manager, 1987). Public work is a way of organizing associational life, the work of building a community together and creating abundant social resources (the commonwealth). In public work, people with different interests and backgrounds come together to solve problems. Through public work, a local community preserves its culture and tradition, adapts to new circumstances, and develops new ways of survival (Boyte, 2011). As a whole, public work emphasizes people's role as agents in co-creating a communal life, spiritually and materially. It "builds social capital, strengthens communities, and gives people skills they need for collective citizenship," as Peter Levine describes (as cited in Boyte, 2011). Public work is free from manipulation of external power, for example, the experts, the elite, and authorities.

Free spaces refer to safe and vibrant public gatherings, where people come together to learn and understand concretized stories from each other, discuss issues that touch their daily life, deliberate over politics, set up common agenda, and work out strategies (Evans & Boyte, 1986). Free spaces are a key element to enlarge the dimension and impact of public work as the development of collective agency and construction of democracy. Free spaces are public life independent from prevalent norms or imposed rules, and they operate as experiment base of new democratic thinking and practices. Free spaces serve as a catalyst to revitalize civic tradition and the democratic role of education.

Civic professionalism solidifies the concept of agency through discussing qualities that form the "civicness" of one's profession, including values, knowledge, skills, dispositions,

and political acumen. Boyte (2011) puts, “Addressing public problems effectively prompts attention to the civic dimensions of professions, where professionals learn to work with other citizens, rather than on them or for them.” Civic professionalism insists the esthetic and moral dimension of an enterprise versus “a technological emphasis which stresses specialization—broadly linked to a utilitarian conception of society as a project for enhancing efficiency and individual satisfaction.”(Sullivan, 1995, p. 28) Civic professionalism adds a new dimension to citizens as voters, protestors or volunteers, with the emphasis of “making work more public” and of the productive and cooperative qualities of one’s civic efforts (Boyte 2011). Theoretically, it is grounded on Dewey’s concept of education, who stresses the “educative dimensions” of all professions as experiences that foster the agency of individuals and collectivities (as cited in Boyte, 2011).

Significance

China and other Asian societies have long recognized the role of education in helping students to improve their moral dispositions and in preparing them to become the transforming force of social advancement. In replying to Goh Report about developing core values for building a nation, former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, one of the most outspoken voices for distinctive values of Asian democracy, points out, “...the litmus test of a good education is whether it nurtures good citizens who can live, work, contend and cooperated in a civilized way” (Cogan, Morris& Print, 2001, p. 7). Therefore, it is significant to continue the conversation of how to enrich this educational tradition through democratization of higher education to help students cultivate a comprehensive set of qualities that are needed for

becoming agents of change in the modern world.

This dissertation is an original work to reconfigure democratic construction and the purpose of higher education through synthesizing traditions, realities, and democratic theories. It overcomes the limitation of previous studies about civic education and citizenship in China. Extensive studies of citizen education in Asia and the Pacific Regions had been conducted by the group work of Cogan, Morris and Print(2002); of Lee, Grossman, Kennedy and Fairbrother (2004); and of Kennedy, Fairbrother and Zhao(2013). Their studies cover concepts, issues, pedagogies, and curriculums of selected countries, including China, and extensively explore the question of what are the distinct and indelible characteristics of Asian citizenship in an effort to answer “what is value” and “what to teach”. Li (2009), Tu (2011), Leung(2006), Li, Zhong, Lin & Zhang (2004), and Law (2006) focus on analyzing histories and current status of civic education in China and argue for a more participative approach. These studies, with a particular focus on the moral dimension, such as the Confucian influence, provide significant reference to compare cultural differences that shape civic education in Asian societies and western liberal societies. However, the connection between moral agency and development of democratic citizenship is ambiguously constructed in their studies. The definition of democracy remains narrow and impotent as a form of systems and institutions. Few studies are able to make a bold vision of the power of people as citizens regarding the question “where it leads to”, especially in the situation of China. They also fail to ground the analysis of citizenship on a large picture of politics and the dynamics of power to provide strategic suggestions on how through civic education citizens are able to cope with major challenges that are eating away the civic fabric of

each society in the modern world. Therefore, there is a certain degree of de-contextualization of these studies in helping to relate civic education to the democratic construction in a society.

As for the question of “how to teach it”, the existing studies mainly examine specific school curriculums and pedagogies in comparison with democratic approaches in liberal societies, in an effort to identify limitation of civic education in China in helping students to develop critical thinking, independent personality, and active citizenship. They recognize that there is too much emphasis of responsibility but not enough participation in current citizenship education in mainland China. Arguments for inclusion of social justice in service programs as an alternative are insightful but lack a strong theoretical foundation that shapes democratic vision and practices of institutions and society. Also the compelling tenancy is to look at the socialist education fleshed out in Ma Zedong Thought as indoctrination, and, therefore, blocks out important light of the tremendous civic treasure that had laid the foundation of public work and had upgraded citizenship based on Confucian moral agency to socialist collective agency. There is not enough understanding of how socialist tradition empowered the ordinary people to construct modernization of China and create a thriving collective way of life. Without a strong theoretical framework that integrates democracy into the life of everyday citizen, service in a local community becomes a one-time experience of helping those in need, cultivating virtues, and accumulating life experience, instead of providing opportunities for students to learn local stewardship and build partnership between institutions and communities. Students are kept away from collective work in a local community and away from becoming the agents of change and problem solvers of their own surroundings. As a whole, questions regarding how to use rich

traditional heritage as the foundation of new democracy and create programs that help to release the power of students and engage them with new democratic values and practices on a daily basis are largely remained unaddressed.

Integrating newest democratic thinking and theories of civic renewal into the local circumstances of China, its tradition, current reality, and prospect, this dissertation provides a new vantage of understanding democracy and higher education by centering on two key questions of “what to teach” and “how to teach it” to help students develop civic and critical capacities that is needed for them becoming the masters of constructing democracy with Chinese characteristics. The purpose of this dissertation is not to achieve validity of accuracy acquired through the theory-hypothesis based positivist research method—which is confined to a neutral and detached stance, but rather to spark ideas and open new grounds of democratic thinking and discussions of reconstructing the project of democracy and education for a better society. It also provides references for policies that guide educational reform in China, whose experiential experiences of refashioning the tradition and culture of collective agency, once succeed, will shed light on educational efforts in civic rejuvenation to the rest of the world.

Chapter One

The Confucian Tradition for Communitarian Democracy

In Confucianism, the meaning of the self is embedded in relation to others. The moral disposition cultivated through one’s social experience is the fundamental basis of a civil society. In the moral context, one develops a sense of truthfulness and consolidates the meaning of self-existence through the validation of various roles and functions in extended social

relationships. With the stress of the aesthetic value of interdependence, mutual-support, and social harmony maintained through individual's sympathetic identification instead of through the mechanical regulation of a certain law, social contract, or external force, Confucianism, as the teaching of humanity, provides rich soil for developing strong civic fabric in Chinese society, which is organized through deeply-bonded and self-regulated interpersonal relationships that are based on sympathy, love, and honor of mutual obligation as the elements for a spontaneous and abundant way of life. Confucianism overlaps with the Dewey's communitarian form of democracy, with the same focus on a communal context that serves as the root and occasion for self enrichment and better way of living. Hall and Ames (1999) remarks: "The relationship between person and community presumed in the Chinese model contrasts with the liberal Western concern to limit state powers as a means of preserving individual autonomy. On the other hand, traditional assumptions about the mutuality of personal and communal ends are in many ways comparable to the Deweyan vision wherein common bonds are constitutive of personal identity" (p.184). Examination of promising elements in the Confucian tradition for the mode of communitarian democracy is significant for constructing new citizenship in modern China.

The Dewey's communitarian form of democracy provides a solution to polarized politics derived from right-based liberalism and significantly influences the meaning of civic engagement. In a liberal society, like the American society, the rights-bearing individual is the fundamental social unit (Hall & Ames). Individuals are associated with each other through a social contract on a voluntary basis, and possess "sufficient rational self-interest to discern the advantage of yielding some of their otherwise unfettered freedom for the sake of safety and

mutual benefits”(Hall & Ames, p.105). Self-autonomy means individual’s capability of making decisions with respect to issues that most crucial to his or her interest. One is independent from any sort of source to authorize his or her decisions and actions. The belief in unalienable rights and autonomy entails the priority of individual rights over community-based values (Hall & Ames). The free will of autonomous individuals decides the meaning of a good way of life, which is usually associated with his or her material desires and interests because of rational self-interest preceding the common good and because of the economic arrangement in most liberal societies (Hall & Ames). Due to freedom of association and disassociation, the community bond is not emphasized, and values of the common good in a community is either abstract or not in place, since it is up to individuals to negotiate and voluntarily contribute (Hall & Ames). The challenge in a rights-based liberal society is to build a viable community that is essential for individual growth and development as Hall and Ames write: “

A fundamental problem with rights-based understandings of democracy is that they have few mechanisms preventing individuals from becoming alienated from communities since the rights serving as the fundamental signs and rewards of a just society are so often enjoyed in private. Such rights do not prevent individuals from joining together in communities or social unions, but neither do they enjoin or stimulate community building. Community building is normally a consequence of a need to promote goods-in-common.” (p.108)

Contrarily, Dewey’s theory of democracy emphasizes the normative role of social relationships and shared experience of a community serving as the guarantee of a full life and the

integrity of an individual. Self achievement is realized and recognized through the roles and functions one performs rather than through his private gains. Dewey claims that “assured and integrated individuality is...the product of definite social relationships and publicly acknowledged functions” (as cited Hall and Ames, p.126). The essential aesthetic character of Dewey’s vision is “particular” instead of “discrete” (Hall and Ames, p.127). Hall and Ames analyze “Individuals are unique elements in a community where members serve in mutually satisfying ways to enrich the experiencing of one another. Interactive, participatory behavior is the mark of a viable democratic community, and this provides the context within which an individual is constituted.” (p.127) Therefore, self-autonomy and freedom rely on one’s efficacy in fulfilling different roles in his community. In another word, freedom is” “efficacious” and becomes effective in a context, not abstract, as the term “minimal constraints” indicates (Hall & Ames, p. 127). Hall and Ames explains the efficacious sense of freedom in the communal context as:

“An individual is free only when conditions promoting a given action are present. Members of communities are responsible for maximizing their fellows’ opportunities to make decisions and perform actions that, in turn, enrich communities.... The Enrichment of community is not an end in itself. The individual, as a participant in the community, benefits from the enriching context. That benefit is shared with the community to the extent that resources for further enrichment of other individuals are augmented. The end of communal interaction is the enrichment of the individuals.” (p. 127)

To Dewey, democracy is not an alternative to other principles of collective life, but the

way of community life itself (Hall & Ames). The aesthetic character of democracy is to promote a life that is enjoyable, social, and productive. There is sensibility in individuals to what is a good life. The major role of education is to sensitize individuals to the common goods in a community, to help individuals to develop intelligence that is accumulated through one's social engagement, and to liberate the powers of each person to contribute to the whole. Dewey believes education's function is to conserve and transmit the best of traditional heritage and at the same time cultivate individuals who can cope with and shape their environment.

Like Dewey's vision of the aesthetic character of enriched individuals and community, Confucianism focuses on cultivating individuals' dispositions as the chief end of socialization. Tu Weiming describes, "Confucianism takes the individual as the point of departure and sees personal growth as a dynamic process that reaches out into ever widening sphere of association"(as cited in Reed, 2004) . In Confucianism, human intelligence comes from sympathy, instead of reason (Ku, 1922). One develops the delicacy of minds, a state of self-composure, through the actual experience of different forms of human affection (love, honor, duty, etc.) and social engagement. In another words, self-disposition and social efficacy co-relate each other and form the main content of Confucian citizenship. A humanistic society based on Confucianism, with its inquiry of life and cultivation of personality, provides promising elements for communitarian form of democracy and civic engagement in China. The following paragraphs examine main elements of Confucianism as a way of citizenship in relation to the Dewey's communitarian form of democracy.

The Rule of Humanity

Confucianism resembles Dewey's stress on an organic model of self and society, and the aesthetic character of social interaction and communication. In Confucianism, a civil society is based on humanity with the rule of moral preceding the rule of law. The former is associated with sympathy, personal attachment, sense of honor, spiritual delightfulness, and mutual obligation. The later is characterized with neutrality, personal detachment, reason, logic and rights protection.

Ku Hungming(1922), also Gu Hongming in Mandarin, a well known European-educated scholar and yet a "staunch defender" of traditional Confucian values, argues the value of Confucianism as the religion of citizenship lies in its belief in the efficacy of the moralized mass, with a sense of duty and honor in maintaining civic orders. This aspect differs from rigid systematic control and religious doctrines based on "the fear of God." In defending Chinese civilization when it falls pray to the militarism associated with Western civilization, Ku points out that civilization began by the conquest of nature to secure security, but the harm which the physical forces of nature can do to mankind is nothing compared with the harm which human passions can do. Therefore, the question about the core value of civilization is not about the urbanization or scientific invention, but lies in what type of humanity, including what types of men and women, it has been able to produce. Human dispositions show the essence and the soul of a civilization. Ku believes that the Confucian system of philosophy and ethics provides a religion of citizenship, with which Chinese people are able develop to the delicacy of the mind to accommodate the vicissitudes of their passion, rejoice in life, and maintain harmony with each other. The relation between character cultivation and a better way of living is also shared by Lin

Yutan (1998), as he writes that Confucius recognizes the “wayward, incalculable, and unpredictable choice” of human beings and provides a philosophy about the cultivation of temperance of personality to take hold of the “free flow of vital energy” in people and enable them to live in harmony. Analyzed by Ku, The delicacy of mind is an integration of the heart and the head. The heart is a delicate balance and sensitive to the human affection that is the nature and soul of human beings. The head or intellect is dry and hard like a rigid instrument. The head is reason and aims at the utilitarian quality, and the heart is where the meaning, dignity, and beauty rest. To make abstract science and logic meaningful and interesting, the heart or the feeling needs to be engaged. Confucianism firmly holds the view that intelligence does not come from reason nor instinct but from sympathy, a feeling of love and attachment. Ku vividly explains, “A thorough bred Arab horse understands his English master not because he has studied English grammar (thinking intellect), nor because he has the instinct for the English language, but because he loves and is attached to his master” (p. 4). The tendency to apply human affection and attachment to explain the capability for the cause of actions sharply contrasts with all kinds of training theories and patterned behaviors based on scientific logic and the rule of law. Emphasizing that the thinking intellectual is guided by genuine human feelings, Confucianism establishes the dominance of humanity over the use of science and technology and systematic control of institutions in guiding interpersonal relationships. Aesthetic orientation that prefers personal attachment rather than the claim of reason (with an emphasis of impersonality) governs the human society. As a result, teaching of humanity has been regarded as important education in Chinese society.

Similar to Dewey, sympathetic identification in Confucianism seems to be a better form of engaging people to produce meanings of their action and living. Sympathy is the capacity to consider other people's feelings and points of view. Action and decision-makings based on sympathetic intelligence is heart-felt, dignified, spontaneous, and naturally developed, rather than dry, detached, regulated, incentivized and trained. In the Confucian tradition, the heart is the seat of thinking and judgment as it is explained by Hall and Ames (1999), "Thinking is never a dispassionate speculative enterprise... [but] involves normative judgment that assess the relative merit of the sensations, inclinations, and appetites" (p.192). With sympathy, one develops intrinsic values that guide thinking and refine self desires and behaviors with the concern to others. Individual differences and rights assertion can be resolved in the concept of harmony based on mutual dependence and mutual obligation. To Ku, the major problem with the western civilization is the split between the heart and the head as a result of lack of sympathy, as he writes:

"Comparing European with Oriental art, Mr. (Bernard) Berenson says: 'Our European art has the fatal tendency to become science and we hardly possess a masterpiece which does not bear the marks of having been a battlefield for divided interests.' Now what I want to say of the European civilization is that it is, as Mr. Berenson says of European art, a battlefield for divided interests; a continuous warfare for the divided interests of science and art on the one hand, and of religion and philosophy on the other; in fact a terrible battlefield where the head and the heart—the soul and the intellect—come into constant conflict"

(p.14)

Ku's argument about the limitation of reason-dominated American society marked with the battlefield of split interests is shared by Hall and Ames in their analysis of the limitation of rights-based liberalism in comparison to Dewey's communitarian democracy. They contend:

“American democracy has become increasingly procedural and neutral: It guarantees a framework of rights enabling persons to choose their own values and ends. In principle, the government neither encourages nor discourages any particular conception of the good life. This conception of freedom leaves the society with a vacuum that is quickly filled by the unbridled proliferation of every kind of marginal, intolerant, moralism: militias, Christian Fundamentalism, militant pro-lifers, neo-Nazis, white supremacy, organized pedophiles, and so on.” (p.169)

Integration of the heart and the head is the wisdom of a collective life in harmony with one's nature, as Mencius observes “For a person to realize fully one's heart-and-mind is to realize fully one's nature and character.” (as cited in Hall and Ames, p.198). In Confucianism, a morally cultivated person lives happily in the simplicity of the life of a child, genuinely following his heart and subjected to minimal external influences and restriction. The creation of civilization, “the immense institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, and laws” is “customary” to people, not “rational” (Ku). Through the practice of self-cultivation, Confucianism provides people a habit of inquiry to find out “the why” and “the wherefore” of things when a system fails to correspond to the actual wants of people for a true life (Ku, p. 21). Underlining human affections as the source of intelligence is the emphasis of a spontaneous self and social action. Confucius believes in the efficacy of people, the “power of goodness” in

human nature. Therefore, he emphasizes the sense of honor in man and relationships instead of rights and the rule of law as the foundation for a civil society (Ku).

The Nature of Being and Self-cultivation

As a framework of citizenship based on humanity, Confucianism first is a philosophy of life, an inquiry of being. In a Confucian individual, the self meaning, dignity, and autonomy have different connotations from individualism in Western societies. Lee (2009) argues that the sense of self in Asian societies under the Confucian influence is closer to individualistic than individualism or individuation defined by Turner:

“According to Turner, individualism is restricted to the notion of individual rights, mainly concerned with the nature of the external relations that connect individuals to society through a social contract and involving the analysis of the network of rights and duties which is seen to be essential to civil society. Individualism as a concept represents the opposition of bourgeois to the feudal system, claiming God-given rights for all individuals. Individuality, by contrast, is a romantic theory of the interior and private nature of personal life...[and] represents literary elites’ opposition to the perceived threat of mass literacy, standardization and commercialization. Individuation refers to bureaucratic practices and disciplines that individuate citizens for purposes of taxation, social regimentation and political surveillance.”

Although the notion of individuality, a Western concept, cannot fully explain the self in Confucianism, it provides helpful reference to understand the Confucian emphasis of the interior quality of the self as the foundation for civil society. As romantic as it may sound, in

Confucianism, the meaning of the self comes from a delightful heart and is associated with the ability to appreciate and enjoy the simple pleasure of being and living in this world. The self should be enriched with human affections and should be spiritually free from the seriousness and sophistication of reason, patterned way of life, or the condition of material comfort. Liang observes heart-oriented Easterners are about to learn to live in a dilapidated house rather than to be bothered to change it like the Westerners (as cited in Lee, 2009). This is because for Confucian individuals, dignity comes from a carefree and enlightened heart, subjected minimally to the mechanical rule, rigid discipline, and commercialism. Lin (1998) describes dignity of the self consists of the following four aspects: first, having the curiosity and natural genius for exploring knowledge; second, having dreams and a lofty idealism (often vague and confused, or cocky); third, the ability to correct dreams with a sense of humor to restrain one's idealism by a more robust and healthy realism; finally, having the ability and freedom to determine one's own reactions and to change surroundings at his will, an aspect closely associated with agency. The last point specifically refers to human personality. It is the last thing to be reduced to mechanical laws. Lin argues: "somehow the human mind is forever elusive, uncatchable and unpredictable, and manages to wriggle out of mechanic laws or a materialistic dialect that crazy psychologist and unmarried economists are trying to impose him. Man, therefore, is a curious, dreamy, humorous and wayward creature." (p. 12)

Lin's remark bears the same air of Confucians' contempt toward the dryness and neutrality of scientific logic as the remedy for human problems, and deeply believes in the superiority of human personality as the determining factor for a good way of life. Lin describes the scamp or

the vagabond as the most glorious type of human beings, “brilliant yet somewhat erratic... still full of mischief and naughtiness, and love of a free-for-all (p.13).” Compared with the scamp, the soldier is the lowest type, “obedient, disciplined, and regimented (p.13).” The idea of the scamp and vagabond shows the concept of free spirit in Chinese culture, which is the total self-possession of meaning, value and purpose of life and ability to chose and act accordingly. The Confucian inquiry of life leads to autonomy and harmony in life with a good quality of personality, the simplistic, original, and spontaneous. The integration of an enriched heart and a refined head forms the delicacy of life.

The internal originality or intrinsic values in a person is channeled through self-cultivation. Self-cultivation is the process of both internalizing morals and truth of being as values and realizing them in the external environment. Self-cultivation involves learning, reflecting, and doing. Through learning about Confucian virtues, one gradually establishes self-consciousness, the inner self, as the hold of his life for rational thinking, judgment, decisions and actions. In reflection, one communicates with the inner-self and reflects on his deeds. Meaning is produced when the actual “doing” is consistent with the inner thinking and self-value is reinforced. Adjustment is made through learning from mistakes when dissonance or uncertainty occurs. Self-cultivation is not a static state, and usually serves as the battlefield for clashing values. Through self-cultivation, one develops capability of self-control and resilience for continuous self-adaptation and self-empowerment. In this sense, self-autonomy is the capability for continuous and coherent self-enrichment through internal cultivation and external execution of true values. Lee (2009) describes that the Chinese equivalent term of liberty means

“from within oneself” to “out of oneself”. In the process “from within oneself” to “out of oneself”, one develops agency, which is described as Executive Function (EF) by Stephanie Carlson (as cited in Boyte, 2015), a Child Development Scientist. Carlson describes Executive Function is “the gradual development of agency, or a sense of self as ‘I’, who can deliberate among possible courses of actions and, with the chosen goal in mind, control my own thoughts and actions in light of the goal, as opposed to allowing the exigencies of the situation to control my self.” She elaborates “The dawning awareness of choice is a fundamental precursor to EF, which comes under conscious control in concert with self-awareness and language. When children begin to say to themselves, ‘I have a choice in how to think, act, and feel,’ they will demonstrate greater and more flexible control over how think, act, and feel.” From this perspective, self-cultivation serves as an important method where a Chinese child learns to develop a reflective and autonomous self, the essential element for agency and self-sufficiency in a society.

Integration of Self-autonomy and Social Efficacy

Individuality, the core element of self-cultivation, is relationally based. In another words, relations serve as the context for self-cultivation, self-refashioning, and self-realization. The relation-based self-cultivation is a dynamic process of self-maturation through accumulating human intelligence of interpersonal relationships and consolidating values based on real experiences when one moves through his social journey. In the context of relation, self-autonomy and social efficacy are the correlated parts of self-cultivation. In self-cultivation, one is open to changes and differences when interacting with the outside world, and consciously engages in

repositioning and refashioning inner self to build fitness in society while keep the fundamental intact. Social efficacy reinforces self-autonomy with the sense of agency, the ability to keep oneself and external situations under an important measure of control. Social efficacy in Chinese society is based on self-sufficient individuals and involves three overlapping capabilities: the ability to maintain an independent spirit and manage life at one's best (dealing with oneself); the ability to balance oneself in the relation to others (dealing with relationships); and the ability to become resilient amid the complexity of a changing situation and environment (dealing with the environment, including society); These capabilities leads to harmony within oneself and with the external environment.

Lee (2009) agrees with De Bary's argument that the position of self in the collectivity of Chinese society should not be understood in the dichotomy between collectivism and individualism. In Chinese society, relationships organize mutually dependent individuals and collectivities. He describes "Within the circle where one has close relations with the collectivity, the Chinese behaves in a very collectivistic manner. However, leaving the relational circle, e.g. after emigration, a Chinese can become surprisingly individualistic." Lee's remark shows the delicacy and the art of interpersonal relations when a Chinese individual integrates his or her self-autonomy with social efficacy.

Different from Western liberalism, self-autonomy in the Confucian tradition is not the value in itself, but rather measured with one's ability to stand for and act in accordance with moral principles, the basic instinct to know right from wrong, when one interacts with society. The moral context supports, validates, signifies, and reinforces self-autonomy. As it is analyzed

previously, the purpose of self-cultivation is closely related to the delicacy of mind, the intelligence of living in a true life with a spontaneous personality. The moral principle is not based on dogmatic teaching, but originates from human affections, which serve as the basic measurement and support for the validity and justification of self-autonomy. Confucius promotes the virtue of the broadest love, *ren* (benevolence or compassion), as a fundamental way for people to see true justice and obtain self-significance in connection with others. As Confucianism indicates, a man can not be truly just to his neighbors unless he loves him (Ku, 1922). The sense of justice derived from human affections justifies and consolidates self-directed efforts. *Ren* is an extension of family values and connects individuals to each other and to the state with a deep sense of mutual-dependence and wholeness of living together. In the relation between a state and society, Confucianism promotes governance by virtues. Benevolence is a virtue to gain people's support to become a sage-king state (Li, 2008). Xunzi once said: "if the sage-king wishes to be secure, there is nothing as good as a just government and love for his people" (as cited in Li, 2008). With *ren*, one is able to see beyond his own ego and overcome the narrow and shallow self with the beauty of humanity, and his heart is therefore enlightened. Therefore, to achieve the delicacy of mind as a person's disposition, one needs first to place himself in the relation with others, and meanings shall arrive when each others' heart resonates.

While *ren* enlightens one's heart, *li* (ritual or social propriety) is a "fine feeling" or good taste to polish the self in terms of temperance, manners, and speech (Ku). *Li* is the reflection and realization of *ren*. A gentleman is able to keep consistence of what he believes (*ren*) and how he practices it (*li*). *Li* is the element that leads to the harmony of interpersonal relationships and

civility in Chinese society. It is the ability to establish self-status in a crowd with the due respect for the dignity of everyone, the poor or the rich; the ability to compromise to take care of each other's need yet stick to the principle of justice and personal integrity; and the ability to subjugate impulses, aggressiveness and emotions to self-discipline and gracefulness in life. Individuals, who polish themselves through *li* and keep an autonomous spirit, distinguish themselves from the rest mediocre, as it is stated in the *Analects*:

“Exemplary persons (junzi 君子) seek harmony not sameness; petty persons, then are the opposite.

Exemplary persons associating openly with others are not partisan; petty persons being partisan do not associate openly with others.

Exemplary persons are self-possessed but not contentious; they gather together with others, but do not form cliques.” (as cited in Hall & Ames, p. 193)

Confucian provides the law of the gentleman (junzi), or the law of an exemplary person, as the reference of self-cultivation. The law of the gentleman teaches individuals how to refine their character and temperance to achieve the delicacy and harmony in life and interpersonal relationships. As Ku wrote, “The law of the gentleman of Confucius tells us that we must obey the true law of our being, not the law of being of the average man in the street or of the vulgar and impure person, but the law of being of what Emerson calls 'the simplest and purest minds' in the world” (p. 51). In Confucianism, a vulgar and impure person, a petty man, usually lacks morality to uplift his soul, so he is not able to stand up and defend his dignity. Occupied with unrestrained passion, such as greed, vulgarity, and selfishness, a petty man loses the

capacity to hear the true voice from his heart and to make rational judgment. His self is actually selfless since he bears no autonomous personality.

Li shows the aesthetic orientation and the practical approach of Confucian education with the deference to the realized excellence. A well-refined individual influences positively his social environment and contributes to social harmony. At the individual level, one performs *li* as a way of respecting others and avoiding self-intrusion. At the collective level, *li* is the art of interpersonal skills and social life, enriched with various forms of good tastes, such as art, literature, and tradition. With *li*, a community aesthetically organizes its daily activities and forms its own culture and language. *Li* is the determining factor of a civilized society (Hall & Ames, 1999).

Other virtues of the law of gentlemen include but are not limited to *yi* (righteousness), *zhi* (wisdom or intelligence), *zhong* (loyalty), and *xiao* (filial piety to family and to the state). Those virtues correlated to each other and form a powerful moral network of Confucianism that guide human intelligence and self-enrichment. These relation-based values shape the concept of what is a good person and what is a good way of life. From there public values start emerging, such as social justice, caring, civility, and tolerance. Confucius believes the potential in each individual to become a gentleman and the power of moral practices to change society, as he wrote “It is the man that can raise the standard of the moral law, and not the moral law that can raise the standard of the man.” (Ku, 1922, p. 51) If everyone follows the law of gentlemen, there would be no need for the rule of law.

Extension of the Self-sphere and Honor of Duty

In the Confucian tradition, the meaning of self expands when connected to external relations. Lee (2009) writes that the dual emphasis of “from within” to “out of” oneself links an autonomous individual to spheres beyond himself, spheres of “the social and national context in respect to humanity”, and “Nature in respect to metaphysics”. It is interesting to see that, as the chief end of Confucianism, self-inspiration and delightfulness for a good way of life is able to produce positive social influences, and that self-cultivation becomes the practices of citizenship. Confucianism recognizes one’s disposition and behaviors have a direct impact on civil society.

Citizenship under the Confucian framework is a way of life that is morally based. Being a good person is the foundation of being a good citizen (Lee, 2009). The chief end in Confucianism is to live as a dutiful son and a good citizen, “of man not in his individual life, but with his fellowmen and in his relation to the State” (Ku, 1922, p.25). Tzii Yu, a disciple of Confucius, says: “A wise man devotes his attention to the foundation of life—the chief end of man. When the foundation is laid, wisdom, religion will come (as cited in Ku, p.26). To Tzii Yu, The foundation of life is to live as a moral being, a dutiful child and good citizen. Confucius believes the lack of right conception of duty is the real cause of misery and suffering of life and decadence of the state. Duty is a higher and nobler motive to influence individual conducts in all ordinary relationships and rises above the consideration of interests and fear. The sense of honor is “the only true, rational, permanent, and absolute basis” of a state and civil society. (Ku, p. 30)

Family relation is the first context that the honor of duty merges. Filial piety is the fundamental virtue that shapes dignity for every Chinese individual. Filial piety shows the deep bond of the mutual affection and mutual obligation toward each other between family members.

In filial piety, the meaning of the self is based on family experience. The question of “who am I” is explored in the family narrative, stories and spirit of previous and current generations. The importance of the self is designated when one becomes part of the ongoing family narrative and bears responsibility of taking care of other people’s needs. With filial piety, one develops the original meaning of the self and is connected in an extended family relationship with one common goal, the wellbeing of the family as the support for the wellbeing of its members. The family experience serves as the initial communal context, where the meaning of self starts to take shape and will become full and mature in various social roles and duties one later assumes in society. Hall and Ames (1999) write:

“The Confucian ‘self’ is not superordinated or individuated, but is rather a complex of roles and functions associated with one’s obligations to the various groupings to which one belongs. A particular person is invested in personalized relationships: this son, this daughter, this father, this brother, this husband, this wife, this citizen, this teacher. In the absences of the performance of those roles, nothing constituting a coherent personality remains: no soul, no mind, no ego, and not even an ‘I know not what’.” (p. 209)

The essence of filial piety is mutual-dependence and mutual-obligation, where develops a close and solid kinship. Filial piety determines the profundity of interpersonal relationships and reduces the practical and utilitarian aspect of reciprocity by adding a shared destiny and oneness of a big family. The mutual-support kinship system helps Chinese families to achieve self-sufficiency and becomes the operational unit that forms Confucian communal communities. Confucian projects are to create communities as extended families (Hall & Ames). The concept

of mutual-assistance goes beyond the family line and includes country fellows from the same village, the same town, the same province, or the same motherland. It is not the spirit of charity, philanthropy, or voluntarism that inspires people to help each other, but the call from the heart where lies the instinct of sympathy (benevolence). The attachment to the origin, to the cultural root, and to the community as occasions for one's self-narrative brings people close to each other. For example, new Chinese immigrants workers in big cities usually connect themselves with their country fellows to get the first-hand advice and support to settle down. Overseas Chinese, especially, the first-generation immigrants, are called compatriots who identify themselves with mainland China in a shared sense of the same root and origin of being a Chinese.

The value of mutual-dependence and mutual obligation in a family has been extended to interpersonal relationships in a community and to the relationship with the state. The shared destiny of one big family produces a strong sense of belongingness in Chinese society and unifies people with a common goal of contributing to the wellbeing of the country as the guarantee of the wellbeing of every individual. The principle of honor and duty in individuals, derived from filial piety, is the fundamental basis for Chinese civic society. When the law of gentlemen (with its moral virtues) takes hold in Chinese society and becomes a habit of heart, it provides the foundation for people to self-organize themselves into an effective political entity—the self-government, like the passage in the Confucian Analects goes:

Lead the people with administrative injunctions (*zheng* 政) and keep them orderly with penal law (*xing* 刑), and they will avoid punishment but will be without a sense of shame (*chi* 耻). Lead them with excellence (*de* 德) and keep them orderly through

ritual propriety(*li* 礼) and they will develop a sense of shame, and moreover, will order themselves (as cited in Hall & Ames, p.173).

Self-government and Confucian Democracy

The rationale for Confucianism as a way of citizenship lies in that it sensitizes people to values of the common good, and that it connects self-autonomy and self-fulfillment to individual roles in a family and society. Through the inquiry of life and self-cultivation, one establishes agency, a spontaneous and independent personality. Since moral is relation-based, one also develops values and the ability of social efficacy, consolidates self-autonomy with the sense of honor and duty, and upgrades the meaning of self-existence. “Live in a good life” and “be a good person” are integrated with moral values and shape the basic meaning of Chinese citizenship. The mutual-dependence of self and relationships in Confucianism resembles Dewey’s notion of the person-in-context, which refers to a community as the experiential recourse to self-realization. The classical Chinese self is one *does* rather than *is* and self-pursuit is constantly related to what is appropriate and meaningful to the relationship concerned. As a result, a community life is organized and coordinated by morally conscious individuals, who, while pursuing self- advantages, have the propensity to consider social justice and social appropriateness (*li*) as the common good. Healthy Confucian societies are largely self-regulating.

The essence of a self-governed community is the continuous growth, the ability to change when modification is requested. The Confucian moral system is based on ambiguous and heartfelt intelligence, human affections, that is not rigidly defined but allows great flexibility and openness for a new interpretation of humanity and aesthetic values. Interpersonal harmony is

achieved when individuals reach consensus through moral-connectedness. Rady Peerenboom contrasts Western liberal commitment to many voices with the traditional Chinese concern for consensus as a social good (as cited in Hall & Ames). In Confucianism, the focus is on the right thinking rather than on the right to think, as Peerenboom writes,

“[Most Chinese political theorists have never accepted the inevitability of pluralism. The dominant belief has been that all interests, including the interests of the state and the individual, are reconcilable. For Confucian (and Daoists), social, even cosmic harmony was attainable and interest are reconcilable as long as moral rulers were on the throne.” (p. 239)

The pluralism mentioned here emphasizes diversified interests across different groups and individuals. The interest group and polarized politics are definitely rejected by Chinese Confucian thinkers. Pluralism in the Chinese context is the coexistence under one shared destiny. Harmony is maintained through the nation and the people's flexibility and resilience in making adjustment based on a broad understanding of love. Confucius believes that differences can be harmonized through mutual appropriateness rather than through claiming rights. This belief resembles Dewey's insistence upon the importance of art and aesthetic activities in establishing the common ground for social togetherness. It allows pluralism existing in Chinese society. The flexibility of the Chinese aesthetic orientation is explained by Hall and Ames when they describe the role of social ritual or appropriateness (*li*) as the aesthetic organization of community. According to them, ritual practices are more “exhortative than prohibitive”, not mere deference to external patterns or norms, but an

ongoing recreation of community requiring the investment of oneself, one's judgment, and one's own sense of cultural importance (p. 205). Ritual is a vehicle for reifying insights of a cultivated person and enabling him to reform the community from his own unique perspective. Therefore, it is viable in China to synthesize Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism into one belief system, which enables Chinese people to make adjustment for a better way of living and self enrichment. It is also viable to unify 56 ethnic groups under one name, the Chinaman, while leaving room for robust and diversified ways of life, habits, and cultures. Harmonization of community life based on individuals' unique experiences and interpersonal interactions are a subtle process, realized through gradual sympathetic identification rather than through political intervention. The flexibility displayed in Confucianism shows promising openness for forming new values of humanity, such as tolerance of homosexuality. A recent example is the transition from early controversy to current tremendous popularity of Jin Xing, a transgender and famous modern dancer in China. She is now hosting her own talk show and applauded by the Chinese audience for her unique personality and acid tongue toward pop culture in China. Like Dewey's communitarian democracy, there is the efficacy of conscious individuals in Confucianism to confront and put a check on the persuasive novelty of beliefs and opinions for their own sake, and the ability of the mass to adapt to and accept new set of values in humanity through engaged collective way of life and communication.

Limitation

The limitation of Confucianism as a way of citizenship lies in its insufficient consideration

of social conditions for practicing and realizing self-cultivation. The organic model of self and civil society in Confucianism remains as an ideal way of life, a social illusion, and fails to develop a comprehensive theory of power relationships, which are the root cause of social injustice and inequality and determine citizens' participation or non-participation. In the relationship between the state and civil society, Confucianism promotes that self-cultivation is essential to good governance, where a ruler develops allegiance from the people by his benevolence and exemplary role. Governing a state is based on ruling by virtues. Familial values, expanding to the state and helping to establish the image of a ruler as a parent and the people as the child, form the foundation of institutionalized paternalism in a Confucian society. The benevolent ruler loves and protects his people like parents love and protect their children. In return, citizens, as dutiful sons or daughters, become habitual to stay loyal to the state in exchange of protection. The assumption in Confucian paternalism is that people should be exempted from worries of public affairs, because the ruling class will take care of it. The dependence on the authority in fact blunts Chinese people's consciousness of rights to participate in politics and to decide their own destiny. It results in a culture of uncritical acceptance of policies and deference to authority. As a result, people have become apolitical, mainly focusing on organizing their family life. Lee (2009) explains the association between the apolitical approach of Confucian citizenship and the acceptance of soft authoritarianism in Asian societies, "To the Eastern citizens, it does not matter who rules and in what way the country is ruled, as far they are in a situation where they can live their lives, they can maintain their relationships, and they can pursue their individuality (in terms of spiritual development), then they will live

whatever the rule is, unless the situation has become intolerable”.

Unfortunately, there is no valid system or due process to impeach a ruler or a local authority for their malpractice and abuse of power. In Confucianism, governmental ministers perform a mediating role by passing down the ruler’s decree and also advise and put checks upon the ruler’s decision. Ideally, ministers are virtuous scholars or intellectuals, who are sensitized to values that support the well-being of the society and of the general population. However, the legitimacy of this kind of system is contingent on many factors, such as ministers’ own personal integrity, their relationships with the mass, and the openness of the ruler. There is no guarantee for the state coherently and democratically formulating and enforcing public policies. Therefore, governance solely based on moral virtues of ruling class is arbitrary and discretionary, not consistent and reliable. Also, there is the likelihood of an elite class of intellectuals dominates the political arena, leading to the further separation of the general public from politics. Although in Confucianism people have the right to rise up and overthrow a despot, rebellions usually do not change social injustice fundamentally as long as the new ruling class keep a tight rein on power to accumulate their own benefits, while the public remains politically apathetic and disengaged.

It is useful to explain the tension and conflict between an organic civil society and a paternalistic state through looking at the dilemmas of Jürgen Habermas’ social ontology about two basic spheres of sociality, life-world and system. Life-world, similar to Dewey’s communal life, is the self-standing and self-replenishing domain of social life based on shared meanings, understandings and human relationships. It provides a social horizon for individuals’ everyday encounter and is the background for communicative actions. In the life-world, people develop

executive functions, moral capacity in Confucianism, to coordinate their actions through validity of their claims (the communicative action). System refers to the formally established spheres of actions, such as the economic and administrative structures, to rationalize great and problematic contingency of the life-world when a tradition fails to coordinate individual differences and social relations (Baxter, 1987). To satisfy the reproduction of the life-world through rationalizing the “flexibility” or the liberation of individuals’ communicative action, Habermas emphasizes the formal-operational skills of qualitative reasoning in a person and the systematized investigation and the evolution of complex and modern bureaucracy in a society, with money and power as the coordinating media (Baxter, 1987). Although system provides another solution to coordinating human interactions and productive activities, the dependency on the rational order tends to result in the colonization of the life-world by the system. This tendency can be seen both in the impact of market mechanism and the planned economy and in the formation of technocracy and the shrinking function of public scrutiny. Habermas is idealistic in his argument for a well-designed system to govern a society. He definitely overlooks the dynamic of power and the intruding nature of modern bureaucracy. In Confucian feudal societies, the institutionalized paternalism had been applied as a tool to colonize civil society to stabilize the power of the ruling class. The culture of loyalty in exchange of protection turns into an expanded and deep-ingrained system of hierarchy and bureaucracy and overshadows public participation. Not surprisingly, early democratic pioneers in 1900s severely denounce the repressive nature of Confucianism and call for forming public spheres to help individuals develop free spirit to overcome docility, a defect in the character of Chinese people.

In short, agency developed from self-cultivation functions at the life sphere and focuses on moral-empowerment rather than political empowerment. Confronting the manipulation or repression of power and money, individuals reflect inwardly and resort to themselves as the solution to cope with external force. Self-endurance, self-adjustment, self-sufficiency, and the will of power are the main tools for solving problems. It is the victory of self-reliance, not the victory of collaborative work. In another words, agency developed from self-cultivation remains at personal level and aims for civility, not for democracy. It has not been sufficiently extended to the public arena for building a collective civic body, which will powerfully and effectively resist negative impact of systematic flaws and initiate a social change. Deliberation in the Confucian tradition is reflective (changing the self) rather than critical (changing the environment). Therefore, it is problematic to define public affairs in Confucianism, since there is no real sense of civic public formed by the ordinary people who reflect, deliberate, and collaborate to solve problems that affect their life. Along the hierarchical line, there seems to be a well-defined boundary of issues that the public can address, especially when the life-world is subordinated to the system and public deliberation is not in place. The culture of dependence on authority as the solution for public affairs actually sets limits on a fuller development of autonomous personality, discourages the formation of civic infrastructure, and becomes the major cause of the “defect” of Chinese character: obedience, selfishness, self-preservation, and political indifference. When the system provides essential protection and keeps social order, the life-world of a Confucian community can be robust with abundant material and spiritual wealth. In the case of tyranny, bloody rebellions and violence usually are unavoidable. To realize an organic and self-creative

Confucian society, the life-world needs to be connected to system, and people should be empowered to play a center role in politics around issues that concerns them and develop their full agency and autonomous personality.

Chapter Two

The Civic Tradition in Socialist China

Public Work and Chairman Mao's Legacy

Work-based democracy in public work stresses the value of labor in relation to the commonwealth and people as the civic agent. The same emphasis can be traced in the political theory of socialism written by Chairman Mao's, which is elaborated into Mao Zedong Thought, the work of collective wisdom of the first-generation leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the founding principles of the new republic of China. Mao Zedong Thought shows Chairman Mao's belief in a strong democratic country based on the people's ownership of the state and power of collaborated efforts to realize China's four modernizations: agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology. The overlapping democratic meaning of public work and the CCP's ideology of constructing a socialist society based on the collective agency of people provides a new vantage to understand China's civic tradition and revitalization. Through analyzing the people's communes, civic education, and civic role models, this section looks at how Mao Zedong Thought, in the light of public work, operates and shapes the public value and people's role as the masters of the new republic of China, a period when ordinary Chinese display a robust civic energy in building the nation that has been severely impaired by wars and political turbulences,

Socialism fits in Chinese society and resembles the Confucian tradition with its emphasis of collectivism, moral interconnectedness, and civil responsibilities. Different from Confucian society, where the subject-to-ruler relation dilutes the people's political consciousness and reduces their social roles to daily family-centered activities in a local community, new democracy blueprinted in socialism provides an exciting vision of a collective way of life and introduces Chinese people to a broader political arena of public affairs. In his political theory of socialism, Chairman Mao recognizes the power relation as a key element in defining democracy and engagement of the ordinary people as the revolution base for social transformation. As he writes, democracy in China should be built on the "dictatorship" of the ordinary people, a coalition consisting of peasants, proletariat, and the petty bourgeoisie; and economic development of the new republic of China should stick to the public ownership to avoid accumulated wealth falling into a few hands, exploitation of the poor, and the dominance of private capital over the livelihood of the people (Marxist.org, 2004). To establish the people's ownership of their environment and involve them in the collaborative work of improving life circumstances, the CCP initiates experiments of land reform and the people's communes in rural areas in 1950s and establishes the preliminary phase of public work for developing collective agency in China.

Collective Ownership and the People's Communes

The people's communes in Kwang Li village, Kwangtung Province, studied by Prinze and Steinle in 1970s, shows how collective ownership and collaborative work can empower people as civic agents, who gains control of their destiny by overcoming poverty and natural

disasters. In order to be consistent with the authors' research, this dissertation keeps the original Cantonese pronunciation of places and the villagers' names, instead of converting them to Mandarin.

Printze and Steinle (1977) observed that poverty permeated rural Chinese life, which had been devastated by centuries of natural disasters and more than a decade of war before the final liberation of China in 1949. Most peasants were landless tenants and hopelessly put their fate in the hands of the landlord and nature. It was estimated that landlords and rich peasants, who accounted for about 10 percent of the population, owned 70 to 80 percent of the land (Fanshen, 2011). Families functioned as separate units, and few of them had the resource to construct waterworks or irrigation systems, purchase water buffalo, or hire extra labors during the busy season. Further more, most peasant families suffered the ravages of flood, draught, famine, and bandits and warlords (Printze & Steinle).

To revitalize China's agricultural base, the CCP launched a series of reforms, which converted rural villages, like Kwang Li, into the testing ground for the collaborative agriculture. The reform had several steps. First, the land reform, implemented in the early 1950s, involved the redistribution of social resource and equalizing the ownership and social status of the formerly landless and poor peasants. Second, agricultural producers' cooperatives (APCS) were established, where farmers were encouraged to pool and jointly manage their land and share basic farming implements and animals. Third, formation of the people's communes upgraded the scale of APCS to recruit sufficient manpower to meet agricultural needs and overcome damages brought out by natural calamities, (Printze & Steinle). The CPC recognized the peasants' local

allegiance and identity. To avoid the disruption of “ancient patterns of life” and “stubborn resistance from peasants”, the CPC merely added new revolutionary titles to the existing villages and neighborhoods, and, at the same time, assimilated the peasants into the socialist system through political education carried out in a variety of ways, such as the mass rallies, grass-roots study groups, and the broadcast stations (Printze & Steinle, p. 55). Establishment of the people’s communes as a model of development displayed the CCP’s belief in solving China’s social problems through the advantage of collective organization and self-sufficiency that was previously inconceivable in the rural areas (Printze & Steinle, 1977; and Leary & Watson, 1982). Collective organizations, served as means to mobilize peasants and to accumulate resources necessary for rural development. Self-sufficiency reflected the belief that “development must be created from within a community with the full participation of all its members”, especially in a situation of scarcity (Leary & Watson, 1982).

Mao Zedong Thought, derived from the political work of Chairman Mao, underlines the CCP’s belief in collective agency, the power of the ordinary people, especially the peasants, and provides theoretical guidance in building socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics. Mao Zedong Thought shows Mao’s acute understanding of social problems in Chinese society and his theoretical alienation from Marxism and the system of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) built under Leninism as well as Stalinism. In his study of *Maosim and the Chinese Revolution*, Lew (1975) describes Maoism as “a rich understanding of the peculiarities of China, an unusual sense of the impulse at work in the masses, and great skill in military strategy and tactics”. Marx argued proletarian revolutions could only occur in developed

capitalized countries, where workers would eventually develop the class consciousness of revolution and rise to overthrow the exploitative system of capitalism (Reimer, 2012). Peasants, as Marx and Engels figured, lacked the same political impulse of collective work and revolution due their short-sighted interest—they simply wanted to own their land and that would be the final goal of a revolution (Blaut, n.d.). According to Marx, countries like Russia and China would not have the proper environment for a proletarian revolution because of their lack of industrialization and their reliance on agriculture (Reimer, 2012). Lenin saw the potential to raise the consciousness of the peasants, an oppressed group, to revolutionary levels in underdeveloped and autocratic nations such as the Russia Empire. However, he believed that a communist revolution could only be successfully implemented by an elite core of revolutionaries called the vanguard (Reimer). His vanguardism put peasants in a secondary position, subjected to leadership of the elite class formed by technocrats. The goal to establish the hegemony of USSR through industrialization resulted in bureaucratization of the state and totalitarianism incarnate in Lenin's successor, Joseph Stalin, whose development plan, schematic in nature, was actually administrative ordering of nature and society and the use of full weight of coercive power to make modernistic design into being (Lew, 1097). The crucial aspect of Maoist theory is that Mao recognized the peasants, instead of industrial workers, as the revolutionary class. Maoism is a theory of practice as the basis of primacy (Lew) and a belief in humanity, the “malleability of human nature” (Koshal, 2011), which can be regarded as a sign of the Confucian influence.

Established in 1921 by the radical section of the bourgeois intellectuals, the Communist Party of China evolved marginally under the dominance of the National Party

(Kuomintang) and was subordinated to the USSR (Lew). In 1927, the CPC lost its urban base after the worker's party led by intellectuals was "smashed" in the massacre conspired by Kuomintang, who represented the bourgeoisie and who revealed impurity of revolution with its attachment to other dominant social forces: "the landlords, the compradors, the warlords" (Lew, p122). Rejecting to follow the Stalinist wing within the Party and to assimilate into "Soviet" bureaucratism, Mao's group, although "less well-armed and poorer in political training", chose to accept "a silent marginality facilitated by geographical remoteness", the rural areas, where the potential of "the huge peasant mass" was overlooked and was regarded as insignificant by Moscow (Lew). The distance from Stalinism was of "far-reaching importance", as Lew commented. It was from there, Maoism emerged with its own specific character of localism, a "concrete totality" that integrated both the old and new constraints, and provided "a bastard solution" of Stalinism and Leninism, the only solution to the national crisis of Chinese society and of the Chinese Communist Party (Lew). Maoism surpassed Marxism by bringing forth solutions to problems of revolutionizing the peasant world. Lew wrote, "Mao's imagination exploited every possible means to cause Communism to rise again in the apparently preposterous setting of exclusively peasant Soviets. But he had, above all, an amazing intuition: properly worked upon, the world of the peasantry could serve as an excellent terrain for the evolution, not just it was all that available, but by virtue of its own value."

The Chinese peasantry, deprived of any social leadership or representation and with a limited horizon that rarely extended beyond their own village, was anything but an organized class (Lew). While Marxists believes in industrialization or technology, Maoism gives a high

value to the human will. The political wisdom of Maoism lies in his fluent deployment of the “essentially practical, quasi-pragmatic aspect” of Chinese culture ((Lew) and the dialectical thinking of Marxism about economics and power dynamics. This wisdom can be understood in his work *On Practice* and *On Contradictions*, which turn into the major guidance of the Party—the Mass Line, Seeking Truth from Facts, and Self-reliance. The Mass Line theorizes how the Party keeps its work close to the mass through the following aspects: serving people wholeheartedly; relying on the ordinary people to fully release their power to build a strong material base for achieving all objectives of the Party’s cause; and keeping a modest attitude in listening to the people so that policies are formulated in accordance with local needs. Seeking Truth from Facts emphasizes the necessity of emancipating thoughts and practices functioning as the testimony to theories. As Mao claims, “knowledge begins with experience” (Lew), Party cadres need to modify policies based on the local circumstances so as to achieve validity and legitimacy. Based on the guidance of Seeking Truth from Facts, China has boldly and innovatively applied an experimental approach to revitalize its economy. Self-reliance, an extension of Confucian traditional virtues, stresses the real circumstance of China and people’s collective power as the starting point for searching a suitable democratic path for China’s advancement.

Serving as a concrete example of Maoism in practice, the people’s communes operated in a three-level system of ownership: the production team as the basic unit, production brigades, and the commune. The production team, with an average of fewer than 170 people, pooled lands, labor, basic farming-implements, and animals to jointly managed the farming tasks and “formed

the unit of account for calculating and dividing income” (Leary & Watson, 1982). “At successively higher levels of organization, the brigade and the commune provided inputs of larger machinery and water resources, general management, and overall planning.” (Leary & Watson) The people’s communes mobilized farmers in several ways. Politically, it embodied the ideal of political and economic equality and served as a model of participatory democracy since the peasants were entitled to take part in decision-making about their collective (Leary & Watson). It had an educative purpose of helping peasants improve their understanding and obtain a measure of control of the economic development. As they moved up to a higher level of corporation, the peasants “were educated away from customs and habits of the traditional small peasant economy” and learned socialist democracy and modern science and technology (Leary & Watson). It is noteworthy that science and technology served as a tool rather than authority, as Leary and Watson observed “The New technology, for example, could be adapted to conform to community requirements rather than dictating them.” Finally, the commune strengthened community development and ensured full employment of the rural labor force with each individual being designated to a certain task based on their will and expertise. Ideally, with the public accumulation, it was able to provide social services and welfare for everyone in the community (Leary & Watson).

In general, the people’s communes helped peasants to establish confidence and develop stewardship in governing their community. In administration, the CCP emphasized local leadership. The commune was the center of administrative authority of clustering villages, providing general guidance and coordination of the work. Members of the administrative

committee, which ran most of elements of commune government, were selected from the local communes, with exception for “model communes”, where only half of posts were filled by natives and the other half by the appointed government employees chosen from the county level (Printze & Steinle, 1977). The CCP required outside experts and administrative cadres to “get their hand dirty” through working alongside the peasants to “prevent the isolation of a bureaucratic elite from the reality of arduous physical labor which still typified life in most of China” (Printze & Steinle, p. 55). The CPC insisted that only the peasants possessed real appreciation of the challenges confronting rural China. Educated engineers and professionals were sent down to work in the fields of the commune to be re-educated. They served as resources rather than the authority.

In the village of Kwang li, Liang Wei-ming, the second highest official in the commune, was “a man of the people and rose through ranks in his native terrain and apparently held his neighbors’ confidence.” (Printze & Steinle, p. 51) Living in Kuang Li forty-three years, Laing, appearing with “blackened nails and callous-hardened hands and feet”, demonstrated “a facile command of CPC doctrine, working closely with people, and a comprehensive knowledge of commune affair.” (p.51)

Liang relied on the mass allies to communicate message from Peking to brigades and production teams. Printze and Steinle observed that “Study meetings were the grass-roots political experience in rural China.” (p.169) In production team, groups of twenty or thirty peasants voluntarily participated in study meetings at a regular basis, for example, sundown every fifth night, following the market day (Printze & Steinle). The purpose of study meetings

was to promote “socialist doctrine” through studying Chairman Mao’ thought and comparing the “present prosperity” with the “pre-Communist poverty”, and to inspire peasants to relate the doctrine to their daily production work (p.169). Participants were encouraged to offer personal comments. Although peasants’ attendance and input did not affect their income, the turnout was high (Printze & Steinle). Practical daily issues of production were discussed to better organize work for the coming days. Study meetings allowed former landless peasants with humble social status to participate in political discussions of the country’s future and understand the significance of their contribution, even although it was not a rally of public deliberation.

The public spirit was high among villagers in Kwang li. As a result of the CCP’s intensive promotion of their wisdom of local circumstance, highly-motivated peasants in Kwang li worked as different production teams, applied their apprenticeship, and built a water conservation system.

“From it they quarried the stone to construct the dam. They anchored the stones with clay from hills. At the site, they mixed their own cement. With steel supplied by the government, they fashioned pipes to use as conduits for the water. They dug eighteen miles of major drainage canals on the cultivated ditches that criss-crossed the commune stretching more than two hundred miles, watering 153,000 mou (25,500 acres) of land”(p.42).

Based on Printze and Steinle’s narrative, the project of water reservoir was led by twenty-one year old Fung, who specialized in bamboo scaffolding. Fung was motivated by the need of commune and volunteered to join in the construction work force in the search of better

ways to control and utilize water. Fung worked with the only university graduate, a water conservation specialist, on a daily basis. Periodically, farm workers from the commune joined their work on the construction project. The project was a public work. The administration committee of the commune provided general guidance and coordinated manpower. It was up to the people who, based on their apprenticeship, self-organized themselves into different work teams to accomplish the goal. The progress was remarkable, as the authors wrote:

“Working slowly and methodically, using hand labor, the people of the commune were erecting a system of aqueducts and tunnels to channel water from the mountain streams into the ever-expanding hydroelectric power system.

Tying bamboo poles together, workers had woven a lofty web of scaffolding hundreds of feet high. This fragile framework provided the means to construct a reinforced concrete aqueduct that would span the wide gap between two hills. While some workmen clambered in the scaffolding, binding the bamboo shafts together, others below them mixed cement and poured it around steel rods. At the same time, their colleagues were blasting tunnels through the hills.

Eventually rain water and mountain streams would flow through these aqueducts and tunnels and cascade through a series of small generators, adding another 1,200 kilowatts of power to the commune’s total capacities. One day, Kwang Li’s leaders hoped that they could even generate power to sell to other communes.” (pp. 44-45)

The Kwang li commune was a good example of how collective ownership enabled the people to overcome poverty and make successful changes of the community. Under the people’s

Communes, individuals and families were united into a collective force to solve problems that affected them, and became confident in control of their destiny and honorable in contributing to the common good. Although the communal system later had been criticized as inefficient due to the absence of specified job description and responsibility, it served as an experiment of collective work to achieve a large goal. The effect was significant during the new republic era when China was facing pressure from the Western's containment of socialist development and the daunting task of restoring social order and building the economy out of scarce social resource and limited industries after decades of wars and invasions. The people's Communes strengthened the nation's confidence about the new democracy under the leadership of the CCP and generated civic passion from the people who were inspired to devote to the "great cause of the socialism". It was reported "Total grain production grew by some 50 per cent (from 195.05 million tonnes in 1957 to 304.8 million tonnes in 1978), the agricultural sector produced enough to feed and clothe an additional 300 million people (from 646.53 million in 1957 to 958.09 million in 1978), and a considerable amount of capital was accumulated to invest in agricultural modernization and in industry" (as cited in Leary & Watson, 1982).

More recently, Huang (2010) conducts a comprehensive investigation of practices of developing new rural communities in eight provinces of underdeveloped western China. The problem, as Huang contents, is that the local government heavily emphasizes economic development and privatization under market mechanism and recklessly neglects the important role of common resources for sustainable prosperity of a community. Common resources, Huang defines, are natural resources—lands, rivers, and mountains; productive resources for economic

development—labors, finance, and raw materials; and common social resources that help to organize collective life and work, such as values, traditions, trust, and cooperation. Common social resources mentioned here can be understood as social capitals, a community's capacity for collective work. Huang says, if measured by economic terms, for example, the average personal income, central and western China is poor; however, as the investigation shows, abundant common social resources, with a long established tradition and culture that shapes the identity, security, and stability of a community, exist even in the most impoverished remote rural areas of southwestern and northwestern China. Huang further contends that the vitalization of rural development relies on how to better organize and use common social resources, which now is greatly undermined because of the domain of privatization and rent-seeking of local governments. He also observes, given the absence of the latter two influences, the indigenous peasants, lacking knowledge and skills of high technology, are always able to apply their culture and tradition to self-organize themselves into actions to solve problems. The operation of privatization and rent-seeking stymies the grass-roots efforts and the development of common social resources (Huang, 2010).

Huang points out that after the open-door reform privatization replaces the collective ownership of lands, leads to the atomization of family and shrinking common social resources, and increases difficulty in forming a community. He compares different social results of developing rural communities between the privatization of Inner Mongolia's grasslands and an integrated system of personal and collective ownership of villages in Heibei. In two villages of Inner Mongolia studied by Huang, the privatization of grasslands results in the enclosure and

marketization of lands and over-growth of cattle. The traditionally public-owned grass lands are taken by forestry and mining industries and by government employees. Due to the lack of collective ownership and coordination, two communities also face drawdown of underground water. As a whole, the environmental quality of grasslands communities is declining. Tension between herders, residents, and outsiders is rising. Comparatively, in the case study of Ren Zhuang village of Zhan Tou town, Hebei province, there is promising community development through combination of private economy and collective ownership. Public lands and resources, such as water, electricity, and machinery are subjected to collective coordination and management for better service. The restoration of common social resources and collective ownership is the key to revitalize rural communities in China, Huang contends.

Mao Zedong Thought and Civic Education

The civic content of Mao Zedong Thought, represented by the work of Chairman Mao, can be summarized as public ownership in collectivism, equal status of different professions, respect for labor, and the ordinary people as the fundamental base for the legitimacy of the Party. It has a tremendous influence in shaping civic education in the new republic and reform era of China between 1950s to early 1990s. Moral-political teaching based on Chairman Mao's thought is adopted at all levels of schools to prepare students to become the masters of the "great socialist cause". The idea of "serving people" in opposition to feudal and Fascist values is written in the words of Article 41 of the common program upon the establishment of the People's Republic of China (Price, 1992). At the National Education Work Conference in April 1978, Deng emphasizes that schools need to attach primary importance to a firm and correct political

orientation toward socialistic values (Price). He remarks, “Great efforts must be made in school to bring up a new generation with socialist consciousness and thus help to revolutionize the general mood of society” (as cited in Price, P.213). The socialist consciousness mentioned by Deng reflects main content of civic education at that time:

“We should work to inculcate in young people the revolutionary style of learning diligently, observing discipline, loving physical labor, taking pleasure in helping others, working hard and daring to fight the enemy so that they will be trained to be fine and competent personnel, loyal to the socialist motherland, to the revolutionary cause of the proletariat and to Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought. Then, someday when they take up a post, they will become workers with a high sense of political responsibility and collectivism, firm revolutionary ideals, the work style of seeking truth from facts and following the mass line, will be able to observe discipline strictly and will work wholeheartedly and actively for the people. (p. 213)

As a best illustration of adopting Mao Zedong Thought in school curriculums, the “five ardent loves” becomes widespread and infused in all subjects. The “five ardent loves” refers to love for the motherland and people, love of labor, love of science, and taking care of public property (Price, 1992). The main slogans of civic education in 1982 was listed below:

“Ardently love the people

Ardently love the motherland

Ardently love the Chinese Communist Party

Ardently love labor

Ardently love science

Ardently love socialism

Diligently study

Ardently love the collective

Protect public property

Observe discipline

Civilized courtesy

Honesty and modesty

Courageous and lively

Working hard and plain living” (p.221)

Education on the “five ardent loves” first promotes public values and stresses the mutuality of the individuals and the collective. Different from the concept of public work in the American context with the emphasis of the re-conciliating nature of democracy and collaboration out of individual differences, the “five ardent loves” advocates the mutual interdependence and united interests of all individuals. A collective is compared to a garden that provides rich soil for individual’s growth, and the work of building a good garden relies on the contribution from every member (Price). This concept can be regarded as a modified version of the Confucian framework of the state-society relation. In Confucianism, the state provides an ultimate protection for its people, who in turn bear responsibility for the prosperity or the downfall of the nation. In socialist China, individuals’ happiness, sense of honor, and efforts of improving living condition are tied to realizing China’s modernization. Loving the collective is the key principle

of the communist morality both at work and school (Price). The underlining purpose is to promote and establish a strong sense of a shared way of life—the mutual enrichment between the collective and individuals. The collective is a broad concept, ranging from a classroom, a work unit to the country and encompassing all aspects of social activities from economic development to daily interpersonal interactions. Individuals from all professions are making contributions to the collective and the motherland through their diligent labor and work. Art, music, literature, and history are indispensable to a rich collective life for their communicative and aesthetic values. Emphasizing the consequentiality of labor, the “five ardent loves” encourages individuals to make efforts in producing public goods through their daily involvement and to develop a sense of honorable membership, since they all are contributing to something larger than their private life.

Secondly, the “five ardent love” educates the virtue of loving and serving people. Undoubtedly, the “ardent love for people” follows Chairman Mao’s guidance of the Mass Line and his recognition for the important work done by the ordinary people. The ideology of “ardent love for people” attempts to reinforce people’s role as co-creators of the commonwealth, to blur the line of social class differences, and to reduce social discrimination and segregation. Students should learn to appreciate the virtue of labor and respect each other’s work. Those whose occupations involve in heavy labor and unpleasant work conditions deserve high social respect since they made the living environment better through their work.

Collectivism is an ideology that regards the collective interest of the mass people as the greatest virtue and the starting point of democracy (Price). To develop the right attitude toward people, the “five ardent love” educate students about overcoming their selfishness and egoism,

taking the pleasure of helping others, and developing virtues of serving people. It also stresses public courtesy, a concept close to *li* (ritual) in the Confucian tradition, appropriateness in speech and behaviors through self-cultivation as a way to respect each other and maintain the harmony in collective life.

The main content of civic education in the new republic and reform era can also be understood in the titles of the following courses in the secondary school, “Foster Communist Ideals; Clarify Rights and Wrong; Differentiate Between Beauty and Ugliness; Nurture Appropriate Hobbies and Interests; Lively and Optimistic; Honest and Modest; Hard Work and Plain Living; Tempering the Will; Carrying on the Spirit of Revolutionary Heroism; and Let Youth Sparkle!” (Price, 1992. p.225) In short, civic education, represented by the “five ardent loves”, calls for individuals’ action upon building a socialist society surrounded by the warmth of mutual interdependence and the beauty of humanity versus the cold capitalist society dominated by degenerated materialism, rugged individualism, and exploitation.

Finally, the “five ardent loves” promotes the active role of students as the masters of the society and the definition of all-rounded talents. The article “How to Establish a Really Good Collective” says “every member of the collective feels the responsibility of a “master”” (Price, p.229). In 1985, Peng Peiyun, the Vice Minister of Education, states that the purpose of education is to cultivate all-rounded talents with the spirit of a master for the four modernizations of China (Price). In Peng Peiyun’s words, talented people (*rencai*) “have ideals, morality, culture, observe discipline; ardently love the socialist motherland and the socialist cause; and possess the spirit of devotion to strengthening and enriching the nation, and enriching the people through

hard struggle” (as cited in Price, p. 214). Ideals refers to the uplifted self-pursuit. Based on Peng Peiyun, it is glorious to become rich through personal efforts; however, one should bear in mind the socialist principle of public ownership and aim at “bringing about the collective enrichment of the whole people” so as to avoid the division of society into two parts (p.214). Morality covers aesthetic values, civility (good living habits and a plain life) and public spiritedness. To a large extend, the content of socialist morality resembles the Confucian tradition in promoting virtues of integrity, bravery, and self-discipline. Culture is knowledge received from schooling, including literacy, liberal arts, science, and technology, which are necessary for the modernization of China. Students are encouraged to apply theories in practices and create new thoughts (Price). To guarantee the efficiency of study, students should persist in physical exercise and actively take part in extracurricular activities.

Besides helping them to acquire knowledge, schools, as good collectives, temper students’ character through overcoming “bad habits”, “self-weakness”, and hardship, nurture their moral-aesthetic sense, and inspire them with “lofty goals” of making contribution to the modernization of China(Price, p.229). In a school, students listen to teachers and stimulate each other through establishing good role models (Price). It is noteworthy how morals, esthetics, academic learning, political consciousness, and civic responsibilities are incorporated into the definition of talents. Although appearing as a political indoctrination, the promotion of all-rounded talents enrich one’s self-pursuit and the concept of social efficacy through emphasizing a broadest way of social contribution. The advocacy of individuals’ role as the masters and the definition of all-rounded talents motivate students to create meanings, values and

purposes with a variety of interests and potentials rather than train them to fit in a narrow discipline and profession prescribed by the commercial interest and jobs available in the market.

In general, the CCP regards character improvement through moral-political education as an important part of building socialist society in China. Influential CCP leaders like Deng Xiaoping and his successors firmly believe that China cannot prosper and democratize itself by economic development alone. A strong and independent socialist country also depends on its spiritual wealth. Deng first mentions the construction of the spiritual civilization necessary for true economic liberation (Dynon, 2008). The main cause of building socialist society with Chinese characteristics is to construct both material and spiritual civilizations to raise “the scientific-cultural level of all ethnic groups, develop a superior, rich and multi-faceted cultural life, and build a high level of socialist spiritual civilization”(as cited in Dynon, 2008). The stress of the spiritual construction shows Chinese socialist leaders follows the early reformists’ idea in late 19th Century— western learning as tools and Chinese learning as the fundamentals(中体西用) — and guards cautiously against the corruptive influences of “foreign vulgar culture”(Dynon), which is “the nihilism, commercialism, hedonism, and consumerism that arose in the course of modernization” in Landsberg’s words (2011).

This same emphasis appears in the “China Dream”, a catchphrase created by the current President Xi’s when he delivers rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation as the new narrative of the public agenda in 2012. The “China Dream” calls for perseverance of traditions and the spirit of Chinese people, who create a five-thousand-year long civilization through hard work and innovation, who fight fearlessly against foreign invasions, and who demonstrate great resilience

in social transition since the implementation of the economic reform (Yang & Norman-Major, 2015). The “China Dream” reinforces the concept of the mutuality between individuals and the all-round prosperity of China as the collective and endeavors to generate positive social energy through engaging citizens from all professions. The virtue of serving people, self-cultivation and self-discipline serve as the main principle of party’s work. Moral-political education molded in Mao Zedong Thought as the socialist ideology demonstrates the Chinese Communist Party’s determination to explore a unique democratic path in China, distinct from Western societies, through upholding humanity as an important paradigm. Prize (1999) wrote, “The Enduring spiritual qualities of Chinese civilization were to act as a counterbalance to the utilitarian but destructive power of the material civilization of the West.

Civic Role Models of Socialist China

Lei Feng’s spirit. In the socialist collective of China, role models play a significant role in representing, stimulating, and shaping the civic spirit of the people. Traditionally, anecdotes of role models are taught in schools or passed down as folk stories by different generations of civilians. Role models rise themselves above others with different merits and virtues that are displayed in their filial piety, heroic deeds, benevolence, determination, or public service.

Comrade Lei Feng was presented as the most representative civic role model in modern China, whose name “became synonymous with being a good person doing good deeds, voluntarily and wholeheartedly beyond the call of one’s duty or job responsibility” (Zhang, 1999, p.114). His anecdotes appeared in books, radios, and movies in China so that everyone could follow his lead. Learning from Lei Feng became major part of civic education in and outside the

school system. This was the story.

Lei Feng was born into a poor landless peasant's family in Hunan Province in 1940, a time when Chinese people were plunged into abysmal poverty and turmoil as a result of the Japanese invasion and the civil war. While "the Old Society" made Lei Feng an orphan and deprived him of all opportunities of self-advancement, "the New Society" under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party gave him a new life with opportunities for education, work, and self-realization (Zhang, p.113). As the "ardent five loves" indicate, the socialist collective was the home to Lei Feng, and the people were as close as family members. Lei Feng was determined to try his best to make a contribution to constructing socialist society in China. The civic spirit of Lei Feng could be understood in three interrelated aspects: serving the people, the "spirit of nail", the "spirit of a screw" (Zhang, 1999)

Lei Feng's highly praised spirit of serving people was reflected in a well-known quote from his diary, "devote the finite life to the infinite cause of serving people" (as cited in Zhang, p. 113). His devotion to Chairman Mao's call "resulted from his birth into poverty and his class standing as a member of the proletariat, the have-nots who were the driving force for the Communist revolution" (Zhang, p.113). Lei Feng was described as forever ready to help whoever in need, wherever he went, and whatever he could do. His assistance to numerous Chinese people ranged from giving his raincoat to a woman with kids, helping passengers with heavy luggage, volunteering for the construction work of building a local primary school, and giving money to those in need. Keeping himself anonymous, Lei Feng personified the highest moral standard of being a socialist comrade through his altruism and commitment to public interest

(Zhang).

The “spirit of nail” referred to Lei Feng’s willingness and determination of self-improvement through study. The advantage of a nail, as Lei Feng wrote, was the ability to squeeze and penetrate into a wood with pressure; so one could always squeeze some time out of daily schedule to study, no matter how busy it was. As the words “squeeze and penetrate” implies, a person should work hard to deepen his knowledge and skills to become better at his own occupation. In another words, one should take full responsibility for work, enjoy his or her profession, and penetrate into it. Lei Feng’s learning aspiration came from his political awareness. As a member of the proletariat, Lei Feng was greatly inspired by the socialist cause as reflected in Chairman Mao’s writing. Lei Feng took extensive notes to read and understand Mao’s work, and wrote diary reflections as a way to cultivate and upgrade his social consciousness. Regarding “the New Society” as his savior, Lei developed a strong loyalty to the Party and was determined to follow Chairman Mao’s instruction (Zhang, p. 113).

The “spirit of a screw” represented Lei Feng’s aspiration of self achievement by doing his jobs well. Lei Feng wrote in his diary that a screw was hardly noticeable but performed an indispensable role in a machine’s operation; so an individual could make significant contribution to the construction of socialism through working hard and doing the job well. Lei Feng received six year of elementary education upon the founding of the People’s Republic of China, became a messenger at the local government office in “response to the movement of Agricultural Cooperation, aimed at leading rural people to the road of collective socialism”, worked at Anshan Iron and Steel Company during the Great Leap Forward movement, and joined the army

as a truck driver in “response to a military draft campaign” (as cited in Zhang, p. 114). He was frequently elected as an “advanced individual,” a role model for his excellent performance and spirit of self-sacrifice and serving people (Zhang, p.113). His spirit of a screw showed his belief in the collective power of people. He wrote: “A drop of water will never dry out if put in the ocean. A person can develop power only when integrated into the collective...Power comes from the unity, wisdom from labor, actions from thoughts, and honor from the collective” (Yuan, 2011). His screw spirit highlighted civic inspiration of integrating one’s personal goal to the great course of socialism and of achieving the extraordinary results out of the ordinary status.

Lei Feng died in accident in the line of duty as an army truck driver in 1962, at the age of 22. Following his death, Chairman Mao inscribed “Learn from Comrade Lei Feng” in calligraphy to recognize Lei Feng’s merits and made March fifth the annual civic day to honor Lei Feng’s legacy (Zhang, 1999). On that day, schools and work units organized voluntary service to the public. Advanced individuals from all occupations were selected as the “new Lei Feng” to promote public spirit in China.

Although the ideals of total altruism and loyalty represented by Lei Feng gradually faded away when materialism and individualism surfaced in economic liberation, his spirit remained significant as a reminder of the socialist civic tradition to Chinese people. Present Xi (2016) said that Lei Feng carried in himself the power of strong belief, the breadth of mind and love, the spirit of altruism, and the firmness in making progress, and those qualities were the best reflection of the national spirit of Chinese people

Zhang Haidi, new Lei Feng in the reform-era. Zhang Haidi was regarded as the new

embodiment of Lei Feng spirit in 1980s for her extraordinary will power of self-pursuit, her spirit of public achievement, and her unique individuality (Zhang, 1999). Zhang Haidi was born in 1955. She became paraplegic at the age of five following four operations to remove tumors in her spine. Although physically “crippled”, Zhang Haidi was determined not to be crippled by fate. Her two personal mottos are a beacon of hope for a significant life to those trapped in despair: “As long as I live, I shall be useful to society,” and “even though your wings are broken, your heart can still fly.”(Wang, 2008)

Due to formal schooling was unavailable to her, she taught herself knowledge of grade-school and college curriculum. She studied medicine, acupuncture and classical literature, grasped English, German, and Japanese, and had translated over one million words since 1983. Her pursuit of knowledge came at the huge expense of personal health. Even though she was constantly faced with a threat of death, Zhang always fought to win the war against her illness in order to learn more (Zhang, 1999). Zhang was persistent in pursuing knowledge in order to be useful to a society. With her determination to achieve a meaningful life through mastering professional knowledge and serving people, Zhang Haidi became a role model to Chinese youth. She used her acupuncture skills to relieve patients of pain and suffering. She volunteered to treat over ten thousands patients, to whom she brought healing as well as renewed confidence in life (Zhang). A well-known example was the story of how her medical treatment enabled an old man to walk and speak again (as cited in Zhang). When helping others, to avoid going to bathroom frequently because of the lack of sensation up to her chest, she limited her water intake to a minimal level that was harmful to her personal health. She was described as having “tenacity to

endure her own suffering and took pleasure in helping others” (Zhang, p.116).

Zhang’s civic virtues defined the meaning of “being functional” in a society, to serve people and make contributions to society through professional knowledge and skill. Her personal example reinforced the moral dimension of one’s professional pursuit. Different from Comrade Lei Feng, she impressed people with her optimism and individuality. She was friends with numerous people and had keen interest in national affairs, artistic appreciation, and love for fashion. Her individuality reflected the animated personality promoted in “the five loves,” and added a new dimension to self-pursuit, which showed that individualism, in terms of good hobbies and interest, could co-exist with public value and political loyalty (Zhang).

The legacy of Lei Feng and Zhang Haidi represents the civic tradition of socialist China. The spirit of Lei Feng and Zhang Haidi as role models appeals to people because they both are the ordinary people with extraordinary achievements. They became the shining stars in the new socialist society by doing what an average Chinese would have done with voluntary initiatives (Zhang). Their stories appeared in text books, the public bulletin board, and the broadcasting, as an inspiration of both traditional virtues (such as self-discipline, the power of will, and self-improvement) and socialist values of serving people and making contribution to the society. In those stories public value and new citizenship were formed and consolidated.

The Socialist Civic Tradition in Summary

Public values that the CCP promotes in role models and political propaganda highlight key components of Mao Zedong Thought as a representation of the socialist civic tradition: collectivism, unity of interests, serving people, and self-improvement. Collectivism aligns

people's interests with the common good of what the new nation stands for, emancipation, sovereignty, egalitarianism, and continuous self-empowerment through construction of democracy, modernization, and humanity. The concept of the united interests as the foundation for socialist democracy reinforces public values of everyone's daily activities and necessity of collective agency for prosperous collective life. The promotion of altruism infuses with the virtue of the "ardent love for people" aims to reduce class segregation and discrimination and offset selfish profit-seeking practices that characterize capitalism and lead to exploitation of labor and polarization of society. Self-improvement demands individuals' ceaseless efforts to uplift their moral and political pursuit for a meaningful life and establish autonomy over one's own living environment through diligent work. In this framework, individuals develop social efficacy in their efforts of self-actualization, since self-interest is integrated with the public good. By "doing what you can to contribute to the collective", one is able to attach a civic identity to his or her daily work. The public dimension of one's daily work fuels a strong sense of self-value and dignity, achieved through his or her social function or efficacy not measured by capacity of generating profits but by the inner capability of self-discipline to keep consistency between beliefs and actions and to resist external temptation that might distort one's moral disposition. This inner ability resembles self-cultivation in Confucianism and the executive function defined by Carlson (2015) as I analyze in the previous chapter.

Spread through massive political propaganda and education at schools and workplace, civic concept derived from Mao Zedong Thought, serves as the framework of constructing democratic life in China. In ways which may be surprising to those schooled in individualist

assumptions, it works in unifying the nation and generating robust social energy. It helps the new government to successfully restore social order from the wreckage of civil wars and foreign invasions. Using the advantage of collective capacity through engaging the ordinary people, China creates a record in eliminating poverty, illiteracy, and epidemics. Printz and Steinle (1977) wrote, “By elevating the plodding reliability of the peasantry to a national ideal, the CCP necessarily exalted the mundane. But in 1973, the peasants’ collective efforts had produced a society that was comfortable and secure—an unprecedented achievement for China (p. 177).” The Party’s pragmatic way of leadership and reliance on collective agency strengthen the nation’s resilience in political turbulences and in economic experiments. The open door policy is initiated since the early 1980s as an economic and political reform to correct mistakes made in the Great Leap Forward Movement and the Cultural Revolution, two consecutive devastating social turbulences during Chairman Mao’s era. Instead of abandoning it, Deng Xiao Ping recasts Mao Zedong Thought in China’s new developing demand and develops his own theory of building socialism with a specific Chinese character.

The rationale of Mao Zedong Thought, as the theory of new democracy in shaping the public agenda, can be examined in its relation with public work and the Confucian tradition. Mao Zedong Thought is the elaborated and modified theoretical framework of Marxism, which is applicable to the culture of China, where the Confucian tradition was strongly established. How does Chinese Communist Party preserve and transform people’s way of living? What is its strategy to keep the essence and discard the dross of the tradition? There are overlapping elements in public work, Mao Zedong Thought, and Confucianism. A synthetic analysis of how

these three frameworks connect to each other is important to understand the civic tradition in China in general.

Public work encompasses both distributive politics (addressing power dynamics and social equality and justice) and generative politics—focusing on people’s role as co-creators (Boyte, 2003). In generative politics, self-organized efforts in creating the commonwealth are the core content of public work, similar to the concept of self-sufficiency in Confucianism and Mao Zedong Thought. Work in the language of the commonwealth determines people’s role as the civic agents (Boyte & Kari, 1996). To a large degree, Mao Zedong Thought covers both types of politics which are implemented simultaneously in constructing modern China.

Firstly, to destroy the land-gentry class and the associated inequality, the new government initiated land reform during the period of 1950-1953 and confiscated lands from the rich class. Violence deployed in the confiscation remains controversial. However, nearly half of China’s cultivated land was reallocated to formerly landless or land-short peasants (Printz & Steinle, 1973). .

Transformation of Confucian communal villages (originally ruled by the landlord-tenant peasants system) into the people’s communes effectively pooled manpower and resources together and encouraged a wide range of popular participation in producing and solving local problems. The feudal system of Chinese peasantry allowed very restrained social mobilization and participation:

“In the past, the peasants’ major intercourse with the outside world was trading produces and livestock at a nearby town and rendering rent to landlords and taxes to state

authorities. Illiterate and immured by antiquated tradition, man was anchored to his land and woman to her home. The only wanderers were itinerant peddlers and landless laborers who drifted through the countryside eking out their existence.” (Printz & Steinle, p. 37)

In a people’s commune, it was the first time that peasants equally collaborated with each other, expanded ancient tradition of interpersonal relationships to new forms of mutual aid production teams, and developed a sense of control and management of their own destiny. The rural life was vigorous and economically self-sufficient. Printz & Steinle observed” The individuality, flexibility and vibrant humanity of the Chinese countryside contrasted sharply with the stereotype images of drab, gray automations which had symbolized Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung’s brave new world to the American psyche.”(p.17)

Secondly, Mao Zedong Thought upholds the construction of socialist democracy through collective agency, the power of the ordinary people, and opens multiple dimensions of public work, culturally and economically. Chairman Mao regards peasants as the “keystone of the new Chinese society and the fountain head of much political and cultural inspiration” (Printz & Steinle, p. 20). The moral-aesthetic value associated with labor and the ordinary people together with the Confucian humanist tradition functions as a counterbalance to a society dominated by market mechanism and technocracy that diminish the power of the ordinary people as co-creators. In certain ways, Mao Zedong Thought downplays the vanguard leadership in shaping a society (as it is promoted in Marxism and Leninism) through attaching political significance to the work of the ordinary people: peasants, laborers, factory workers, men, and women. It serves as political guidance on building social allegiance and civic fabric. Early initiatives of empowering the

ordinary people and their collaborative work in the people's communes can be regarded as the prototype of public work, which has been firmly grounded on the concept of agency for building the commonwealth, the collectivism.

As a concept of the commonwealth in the Chinese socialist context, collectivism resembles Confucianism in emphasizing the unity of interests and mutual enrichment between the community and individuals. Therefore, in configuring the commonwealth of China, nationalism becomes a dominant voice. Nationalism is the extension and advancement of traditional values of the shared destiny, self-reliance, and self-strengthening of the nation. In the Confucian tradition, the wellbeing of the country is the foundation for the security and prosperity of individuals, as a famous Chinese saying goes "the teeth will suffer from the cold if the lip is gone (chun we ci han)." As the biggest collective, the state provides protection and ultimate order so its diligent people can self-organize themselves to settle down, build a life, and live in harmony with their environment. After two Opium Wars (1839-1860), concluded with unequal treaties with the British and French, China fell prey to foreign invasions and became a semi-colony of western powers. The nation's integrity was jeopardized and the people were subjected to the oppression of "three big mountains"—imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic-capitalism. The Chinese Communist Party emerged from the outburst of the May Fourth Movement led by college students in Peking (Beijing) who protest against the weak response of the warlord government to the Treaty of Versailles, which allowed Japan to take over Shangdong Province from Germany (Chinese posters.net). The movement called for democracy and science as the solution to the nation's crisis. The vicissitudes of the nation, from the

prosperous Middle Kingdom to the disgraceful period of colonization and to the traumatic turbulence of Japanese invasion and the Chinese Civil War, greatly affected individual's living situation and fortified the significance of the shared destiny and wholeness of the Chinese nation. Nationalism and patriotism is crucial to formulating a civic agenda and configuring the commonwealth in Chinese society. The impressive work of Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 and Shanghai World Expo in 2010, involving millions of volunteers, powerfully illustrates how national pride continues to stimulate tremendous civic commitment in China.

At the heart of collectivism embodied in Mao Zedong Thought is the concept of collective agency, which connects daily activities of the ordinary people to a larger civic course, the modernization of socialist China. When work is related to the commonwealth, one's dignity, meaning, and importance of what he or she produces become visible (Boyte & Kari, 1996). In Chairman Mao's era, there is a strong aesthetic value associated with one's labor, highlighting peasants as role models and ordinary workers making extraordinary contribution. Work-based democracy empowers people with the honor of collectively producing social impacts through their own efforts, introduces them to a large arena of public participation, and liberates their minds from superstitions, ignorance, and tenant mentality. For example, women are liberated from traditional roles subordinated to husband and household, as Chairman Mao's declares, "Women hold up half of the sky." Women's active social participation during Mao's era is symbolically represented in the image of the first female tractor driver printed on the Chinese dollar bill issued in 1962. This image promotes women's equal status and their civic role in making contributions to China, including exploring and developing the wild north (CCTV,

2009).

Through promoting the virtue of labor, China, to some degrees, prevents the dominance of technocracy when the elite class formed by academic and technical experts takes the control of prescribing formulas to solve problems. Chairman Mao believes that knowledge comes from experience, and theories need to be implemented and modified in accordance with local situations. The guiding principle of Seeking Truth from Facts aims to make the best combination of the state-craft and local *mētis* described by James Scott (1999) in his analysis of how certain modernistic design (schemes) to improve human condition have failed. Technocratic statecraft refers to applying an administrative order through scientific knowledge and theoretical design to achieve a large-scale transformation and standardization of human society and nature (Scott, 1999). Statecraft usually fails to improve human conditions when imposed homogenously through state power without respecting the local *mētis*, which is the practical knowledge, tradition, and acquired intelligence of local community responding to the ecological change of natural and human environment (Scott, 1999). In contrast to the statecraft of Stalinism, the CCP takes an experimental approach to establish the people's communes and largely preserves the existing patterns of villages and neighborhoods to avoid the immediate disruption of villagers' life. Local traditions, interpersonal relationships, and stewardship play an important role in organizing collaborative production and vitalize the rural economy in the new republic of China. Mao rejects formal education as a basis of the new hierarchy and requests downward transfer that sends staff members to rural areas to gain practical experience in lower-level line positions (Paltiel, 1992). Adhering to the principle of Seeking Truth from Facts, the CCP decrees rural

working experiences as the credential for the appointment and promotion of a cadre.

Finally, China prioritizes constructing the spiritual civilization as an important political agenda in conjunction with economic development to form the meaning of modern China. This priority indicates that Chinese leaders are well aware of dialectical relation between democracy and modernization. Modernization advances democracy through providing a better living environment. It also destroys the traditional ties connecting individuals and communities and causes a sense of dislocation and urban anonymity experienced by individuals. As a counteractive response to the effect of modernization, public work emphasizes communal bonds of moral-relatedness and mutual-dependence for creating a democratic society that accommodates rich ethnicity, cultures, and traditions (Boyte, 1999). Similarly, Confucianism argues for the spontaneity of human nature and individuality released in a harmonious society, free from the control of a certain scheme. Traditionally, China stresses an enriched cultural life and shares the same rationale of public work. The first task of cultural enrichment is to preserve and advance the tradition that shapes the spirit of Chinese people. A local tradition serves as the civic foundation for building democracy, buffers the impact of urbanization, and allows continuity of life in a gradual and smooth social transition. Integration of the Confucian tradition and socialist democracy works in several ways to strengthen the civic fabric in Chinese society. While the Confucian tradition provides a solid base for individuals to ground and position themselves amid complexity of modern world, socialist democracy liberate them to explore new meanings and values of life. Also, at the workplace, parental leadership and virtues of benevolence are merged with public-spiritedness and connect people to each other with a deep

bond rather than simple employment relationships. Work is humanized when it makes visible the depth of interpersonal relations, morality, honor, and individuality. In a traditional work unit of socialist China, the union of labor is regarded as the home for employees. Besides managing employees' basic benefits, it also organizes recreational activities (leisure, sports) to create a lively collective atmosphere. Leaders provide care and reconciliation to their subordinates regarding the latter's family issues. Lastly, artistic pursuit and study of humanity are indispensable to cultural enrichment along with scientific development, as Chairman Mao mentions that the correct way to deal with social differences is to "Let a hundred flowers blossom". In short, cultural enrichment reflects an important aspect of public work about the democracy as a way of life, where individuals develop meaning, purpose, and joyfulness from the ambiguity and appreciativeness of artistic work of human experience and relation to nature. It overlaps the Confucian concept of harmony and humanity and reflects the habit of heart of Chinese people in exploring life pleasure in various forms. If successfully implemented, cultural enrichment will form a new paradigm against the impact of the consumer culture and dominance of science and technology.

Conforming Politics versus Citizen Politics: Limitation of Moral-political Work as Civic Education

The limitation of the moral-political work initiated in Mao's era is that it promotes the dominance of the collective consensus overriding individual differences and leads to the formation of conforming politics. In conforming politics, citizens indiscriminately follow an imposed political standard and policies formulated above. People act on public affairs in

compliance with command given by authorities. Unity of thinking and action is requested. It is power over rather than power with people. Conforming politics serves as a way to avoid the deadlock between different interests and works effectively to coordinate social resource and achieve political goals. It is necessary during a certain critical period to save the nation out of crisis. However, in conforming politics, the space for public sphere is limited to facilitate independent reasoning and dialogues among different perspectives. Chairman Mao originally based his theory of the Mass Line on the dichotomy between collectivism and individualism, which serves as the theoretical battlefield differentiating socialism from capitalism. The dominance of the unity of interests leaves a political vacuum in discussing how the public agenda is formed and its specific relation to individual rights. Perhaps, the belief is that China will eventually be able to establish a comprehensive system of individual rights when reaching the egalitarian stage through modernization. Therefore, at the initial state of social development, the general rule is individual interest subordinated or sacrificed to the collective interest, as it symbolically represented by the slogan of serving people and the prevalence of nationalism. In conforming politics, individual rights are nebulously connected to the public agenda, and independent reasoning is paralyzed and replaced by absolute loyalty and compliance. Assertion of difference and individualism is greatly repressed, subjecting to invisible force of political standards. Self-interest, different from selfishness, concerns one's particular background and life objectives and how the sense of self is connected to the common good. It is the key element discussed in public deliberation and civic engagement. Without a sophisticated discussion of how self-interest and the common good are connected to a certain policy, democratic reasoning,

as the core part forming collective agency, is underdeveloped in conforming politics.

Underdeveloped public deliberation indicates a low degree of engaging and empowering people as civic agents. In citizen politics, people are enabled to participate in different levels of citizenship, from performing legal duties, doing volunteer work, to addressing the root cause of social injustice and taking actions through self-organized efforts. They are able to utilize existing or newly-created public spaces to talk about issues, concerns, and values and develop skills and ways to act on them. An agreement or consensus is reached within the group instead of being passed down by authorities. The purpose is to synthesize morals with democratic thinking to rebuild public values that recognize, accommodate, and represent differences, rather than to coerce, reject and eliminate them. A local government can serve as the catalyst and mediator for the collaborative work of the people.

In China, the mediating role of a local government is critical to guarantee the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Party's policy since local government bears the responsibility to modify and integrate general policies into local circumstances to better serve the people, and provides feedback back to the central government. However, without an effective civic infrastructure to get people involved, democratic possibility of civic agency and policy implementation under the guidance of the Mass Line is restrained. The concept of people as co-creators depends on what people can decide and what they can do to make a change. Civic agency under moral-political work of Chairman Mao mainly refers to volunteerism and the spirit of serving people. The right political consciousness is measured by one's knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought and merits of public service. Being democratic is being civil, moral, and altruistic. Even

Lei Feng and Zhang Haidi, the most exemplary models, fail to develop political shrewdness and professionalism in analyzing and addressing public affairs and power dynamic. In conforming politics, lack of political reasoning is detrimental to the development of collective agency. For example, during China's Cultural Revolution, the mass followed blindly the manipulated guidance by the Grand Four and participated in political persecution on those who were preposterously labeled as the enemies (bourgeoisies and dissidents) due to their different viewpoint, education level, or living style. Furthermore, without public sphere, a platform that connects the life world to the system, citizens' role in influencing politics and decision making is limited. The framework of Mao Zedong Thought works best when the Party's work is under the scrutiny of people. Without sufficient access and a valid system to guarantee people's surveillance, there is a high likelihood of abuse of power under the disguise of conforming political standards. The rampant corruption in modern China is also a result of insufficient civic participation.

In general, citizenship in modern China resembles the Confucian framework and takes an apolitical approach, due to the inadequately developed civic infrastructure to encourage people's political participation and their full role of being the agent of change. The relation between civic agency and local government in different frameworks can be understood in the following chart. This chart helps to understand civic framework of China shaped by the interwoven forces of tradition and socialism, its strength and limitation.

Civic change and local government in different frameworks

Paradigms of political theory	Liberal (Government-centered)	Communitarian (Community-centered)	Civic Studies/Agency (Work-centered)
Democracy's distinguishing feature	Free elections, rule of law	Civil society, associational life	Way of life built through public work developing agency
Citizen	Voter, individual rights-holder	Volunteer	Co-creator
Citizenship	Voting	Community involvement	Public work, paid as well as unpaid work (e.g. citizen teacher, civil servant with civic identity, etc.)
Political aim	Who gets what, conflictual	Harmony	Civic agency (empowerment across differences), constructive as well as conflicted
Location	Government, parties	Communities	Free spaces
Power	Power over resources	Power with	Power to
Methods of change	Elections, protest, advocacy, information	Service projects, voluntarism	Civic organizing in communities, professions, institutions
Local government's role	Service delivery	Facilitating dialogues	Catalyzing public work, empowering partner

Harry Boyte 2015, building from work of the Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship in South Africa and Civic Studies. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/18790170/Frameworks_of_civic_change_and_education

Based on this chart, civic framework in China can be referred as the communitarian approach with some variances. Under the combined influence of the Confucian tradition and theory of socialist construction, China is a civil society with humanity and harmony as the main

theme of civic culture. Democracy as a way of life is associated with “being good” and “doing good.” “Being good” refers to the moral pursuit through self-cultivation as a living habit to generate meanings. “Doing good” is the practice and realization of “being good.” These two values shape the basic content of citizenship. Citizens are defined as co-creators making contributions to the commonwealth through their work. “Doing what you can” to enrich the community and the people are regarded as the civic work. Due to the emphasis of spiritual construction and cultural enrichment, there is robust self-organized associational life and volunteer activities. However, most of organizations stay outside of politics. The local government plays both paternal and medicating role. It conveys policies and instructions from the central government, and is supposed to work with the people to collaboratively build local communities. To a large degree, democratic communal life is determined by the moral merits and civic consciousness of the administrators. Due to the lack of public sphere for political engagement, democracy promised by governance by virtues is fragile, vulnerable to abuse of power and social injustice as a result of invasion of power and money.

When China opens up to the world and introduces the market economy, it experiences profound social transitions and demographic changes. Individualism, the consumer cultures, and growing social inequality characterize modernization of China. The established tradition of collective agency (people as the masters of the society) has been greatly weakened by corruptions and the hegemony of money and power. A new civic agenda needs to be put in place to integrate the new paradigm of individualism and collectivism and to engage people to solve critical issues that China is facing today.

Chapter Three

Civic Crisis and Moral Decline in Modern China

Social capital, defined as the health of institutions and the commitment of citizens to democracy, plays a vital role in safeguarding democracy and humanity in a society (Cogan, Morris & Print, 2002). Consisting of the professional and collaborative body of citizens, institutions, and associations, social capital is able to produce strong public surveillance and help a government overcome systemic flaws. It enables citizens to counteract the manipulating force of power and money and serves as a solid base to hold the nation together amid of a dramatic social change and crisis. Social capital is essential to deal with the rapid and profound changes brought about by cultural and economic globalization in the modern world (Cogan, Morris & Print, 2002). Institutions, where transformation of personality takes place, play an important role of developing and enhancing social capital (Putnam, 2001).

Social capital is closely related to the concept of moral and collective agency in the Confucian and socialist tradition, where people's power is recognized as the transformative force of social development. The agglomeration of every morally cultivated individual, with a sense of honor and public spirit, is the fundamental basis of a civil and democratic society. The emphasis of the mutuality between the self and the collective has led to a vibrant collective way of living in China. However, without a sustainable civic organism to continuously defend and refashion democratic pursuit of the citizens, the vital civic energy released from the socialistic liberation starts withering due to new forms of colonization of power and money, appearing in the process of modernization and globalization in Chinese society.

Civic activism under the framework of Mao Zedong Thought reached its peak in the late 1980s, marked by the Tiananmen Square student's democratic movement in 1989, when nearly a million residents from all walks of life joined college students in a protest against systemic flaws of the Chinese government to address issues of corruption, inflation, and unemployment. This movement could be a historical transition to a new form of democratic citizenship and formation of strong civic muscles in Chinese society, provided how the confrontation and dialogue were maneuvered. For example, in 1963, the strategic planning and victory of the March on Washington DC, under the theme of job and freedom, opened a new chapter of the American civil rights movement. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act, this event shook the grip of racial discrimination in American society. Factors leading to the crackdown on the Tiananmen Square movement needs to be further explored, including the split between the pro-democracy reformists and the pro-stability conservatives within the central leadership of the Party; and the immaturity of college student leadership in strategically organizing the movement and negotiating with the government. However, the outrageous suppression of the Tiananmen Square movement catastrophically destroyed civic spirit in Chinese society and brought people back to a conservative spot of self-protection and an apolitical path of social engagement. Public acquiesce and estrangement become the main characteristic of Chinese political culture.

The withering civic culture is deadly to democratic construction and the collective way of life in Chinese society, extensively affecting communal values that are inherited from both the Confucian and Chinese socialist traditions, such as moral inter-connectedness and public work.

Like the rest of world, China confronts the impact of the consumer culture, corporate economy, and technocracy, the new forms of colonization in the modern world, threatening the civic fabric in many societies (Boyte, 2009). In the consumer culture, materialism takes hold as the end of living with big corporate determining consumption patterns. Technocracy refers to the class of experts and elites controlling the discourse of public affairs and decision-making process (Boyte, 2009). In the consumer culture, individuals are gradually estranged from their role as the master of the state and turn into passive consumers. Material pursuit invades the inquiry of life in Confucianism and dilutes one's sensibility to the need for autonomous personality and spiritual reflection. When the impact of the consumer culture is entwined with the unchecked operation of government, social injustice proliferates in Chinese society, leading to the collapse of civic fabric and moral deterioration. The culture of mutual-love and mutual-aid of the socialist collective has been gradually replaced by social apathy and mentality of spectators.

Practices of privilege and unguarded social injustice lead to the moral decline and youth alienation in Chinese society. The following sections examine pressing issues of youth alienation under the impact of the consumer culture and social injustice in modern China and argue for tremendous urgency for the civic renewal and the importance of the democratic role of higher education in developing professional citizens.

The Impact of the Consumer Culture

The consumer culture degrades the value of labor and erodes the work-based democracy (Boyte & Kari, 1997). The democratic possibility of a workplace depends on existence of a civic dimension that recognizes the rich and important values of what ordinary people have been

producing. Questions of what wealth is, what is produced, and who produce it connect work to the public purpose and the rest of society (Boyte & Kari, 1997). In the consumer culture, the meaning of wealth and value is reduced to economic development and profit generated by excessive production and consumption of goods. Workers become cheap labors, working anonymously in a separate unit of assembling line. Individual's dignity associated with the civic importance of labor shrinks and is replaced by a sheer sense of instrumentality. China joins the global economic tide and becomes the world's biggest manufacturing headquarter. The civic role of a workplace as the collective quickly gives way to the purpose of profit-maximization. Big manufactories exploit workers to minimize costs and remain detached to both the mental and physical wellbeing of the later. The presence of numerous sweatshops contrasts sharply the concept of the collective in Mao Zedong Thought, ravages public value at a workplace, and diminishes dignity and honor from poor immigrant workers from rural areas, who were once regarded as the base of the democratic revolution and creators of the new China. In 2010, after a series of suicide committed by fourteen young immigrant workers at the factory compound of Foxconn Technology Group, the world giant electronic suppliers in Shenzhen, local Chinese government readjusted the threshold of minimal income (Chan, 2010). Let alone the question of how much will be equitable to deal with the abysmal gap between the rich and the poor and help the underprivileged move up along the social ladders, the key issue remains unaddressed, which is how to bring back civic virtues and dignified personality at a workplace, break the chain of exploitation, and renew the tradition of collective agency, democracy for the ordinary people.

The consumer culture establishes the hegemony of money and power, a new caste of

system with the rich superior to the poor in Chinese society. In the consumer culture, self-value and status are reflected in the goods one consumes, the places one goes to eat, and the brand one wears. Materialism prevails over the pursuit of spirituality, morals, and esthetics. Self-cultivation and the law of gentlemen lose meaning to shape a good taste and disposition of individuals. Business tycoons and big cooperates determine consumption patterns and standards of life. People's nobility are ranked into different classes according to their financial status and consuming capacity. China steps into the era of conspicuous consumption, with individuals acquiring luxury brands and services to publicly display their so-called nobility and high social status. Since the pursuit of Western luxurious brands, somehow, is related to a good taste and higher social status, the dramatic scenario of Chinese tourists lining up in luxurious stores appears at different world outlets. In 2011, a young girl, Gui Meimei, becomes an online celebrity by ostentatiously displaying her lavish style, representatively, Mercedes, and claiming herself a manager of Red Cross (Wang, 2014). To many Chinese young persons, having an Apple product is a status symbol. It is appalling that a seventeen-year-old teenager sold his kidney for \$ 3500 at the black market to buy an iPad and iPhone; and the worse part of this tragic story is that he only received 10% of the transaction (Koetsier, 2012). The large share of \$35000 in total was split among a surgeon, a hospital official, and a mastermind who tracked and coordinated internet chat room to find out possible donators (Koetsier, 2012). In the new caste of the consumer culture, young people's concept of self-value is severely distorted. Everything, even human organs, can be commercialized and transacted. The disgraceful emergence of a well-developed chain of the organ transaction network exposes the collapse of moral standards,

incapacitation of the rule of law, and the alarming crisis that Chinese society is experiencing.

The consumer culture diminishes the spiritual pursuit promoted in the Confucian-socialist tradition and impairs public values and self-cognition of the young people. Along with the accumulation of wealth, China witnesses a transition from the generation of self-sacrifice to the generation of extravagance and the evaporation of virtues of a plain life, self-reliance, and thrifty. Traditional civic role models, like Lei Feng and Zhang Haidi, have been replaced by entertainment celebrities who are named as “goodness” or “god” as the new inspiration of life. Several catchphrases, appearing in 2013, well illustrate the depreciation of the traditional definition of nobility and excellence by young people. The new model that one dreams to be is “tall-rich-handsome” (*gao fu shuai*) for a man, and “white –rich-pretty” (*bai fu mei*) for a girl. White refers to light skin. According to the new standard of excellence, wealth and physical traits are symbols of self-value. Ordinary people are derogatorily described as *daosi* to show their humble family background, mediocre appearance, and a dead-end job. It is an insult to the Chinese national spirit when the sense of inferiority, associated with the term “*diao si*”, has been widely accepted and internalized by the ordinary people. Mencius says:

“Neither wealth nor fame can corrupt one. Neither poverty nor humbleness can make one swerve from principle. Neither a threat nor force can subdue him.” (“The Greatest and Strongest Moral Force”, 2012)

Mencius incisively describes the spirit of a Chinese, the unyielding will of defending his dignity, principles, and autonomous personality. The shrinkage of civic values and the reduction of the ordinary people’s role as the co-creator to the mediocre and insignificant existence of

daosi indicate dwindled self-confidence and self-enlightenment among the public. Citizens have been placed into an impotent position to assert their status as collective agents and fight for social justice.

The impact of the consumer culture is aggravated by systematic injustice and rampant political corruption, leading to the diminishing civic spirit and social insecurity in Chinese society. Human rights and the rule of law are subjected to privilege and power. Without a strong civic organism to defend social justice, the public loses courage to step in to intervene and remain apathetic to public affairs as a way of self-protection. In 2010, a 22-year-old intoxicated driver struck two girls head-on (with one seriously being injured and the other dead in the hospital) at the campus of Heibei University (Wines, 2010). He tried to speed away and threatened unflinchingly the security guard who intercepted him that his father is Li Gang, a deputy police chief in the local district. The incident of “My father is li Gang” uncovered the gripping socio-drama of rampant corruption in Chinese society (Wines, 2010). In July 2015, six Chinese study-abroad students, born between the year of 1996 and 1997, stood trial at the Pomona Superior Court, California, for allegedly kidnapping and torturing a fellow exchange student under the motive of a rivalry in a relationship. Six girls and four boys participated in or watched the outrageous five-hour attack, involving stripping, kicking, slapping, cutting hairs, and burning nipples (Ma, 2015). Three admitted to committee the assault and several fled back to China. The father of one of the defendants was under arrest for attempting to pay off the witness and victim to the assault, with the endeavor to settle the situation in the Chinese way. It is not uncommon for the privileged transgressor pulling strings to smooth the situation in China.

The epidemic of malpractices of power and privilege has spread to campus and leads to a high rate of group ganging on one student among juveniles in China. When power and money infringe public morale and the rule of law, they give rise to a culture of violence and spectators. The phenomenon “*peng ci*”, a co-product of the mentality of the spectator, catches social attention in China. *Peng ci*, literally means “touch the porcelain”, and refers to malicious blackmail through a deliberative set-up incident, such as falling on the ground. People with good intention, including foreigners, who step into the scene to help, usually become the victims of blackmail. The upside-down of morality in Chinese society shows tremendous urgency for the civic and democratic renewal in China. President Xi alerts that political corruption in China reaches a serious level and can eventually lead to the dissolution of the country and the Party (Hang, 2012). Xi and his administration demonstrate determination to fight a long-term battle to root out corruption in China. An enduring and effective anti-corruption endeavor and its sustainable victory, however, will depend on active participation of citizens to guard and solve issues that affect their life and environment. Public engagement can contribute to not only the transparency and efficiency of governmental operations but also to revitalizing the collective life and civic culture through creating a collaborative relationship,

The Impact of the Consumer Culture on Higher Education

Under the influence of the consumer culture, the purpose of higher education has been shifted from cultivating all-rounded talents to meeting the market needs. Education programs have been largely commercialized and industrialized. Social efficacy and autonomous personality, two important elements for developing collective agency emphasized both in the Confucian and

socialist tradition, lost significance in shaping the education purpose.

In Confucianism, the purpose of education is to realize the law of gentlemen, who possess exemplary personality, temperance, knowledge, and wisdom. According to the Great Learning, to achieve world harmony and peace, a country needs to order well its own state. A well-ordered state depends on regulated families, which in turn rely on cultivated individuals. The cultivation of individuals first requires rectification of their hearts. Knowledge learnt through the extensive investigation of things and life helps one to secure sincere thoughts, which is the premise of the refinement of heart (Muller, 2013). In short, cultivated individuals, with refined characters, are the basis of state governance and civil society. In the new era of socialist China, schools and institutions follow the same stress on character development as the purpose of education, aiming to cultivate all-rounded talents through a comprehensive program of intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education. Besides professional knowledge and skills, one needs to develop moral-aesthetic values and public spiritedness to attain social efficacy. The concept of “being useful to society through doing what one can” helps an individual develop honor and meaning. Autonomous personality and social efficacy are closely related to the concept of the master of the socialist collective, the agent of the social modernization.

When the consumer culture prevails, the purpose of education is narrowed to proving a ticket to jobs available in the market. The definition of all-rounded talent is devalued and narrowed to a specialized discipline in business and technology. Personal dispositions and the executive function are diminished under the domain of different professions, structured and ranked under the influence of market and modernization characterized by a culture of celebrity.

There is a split between spiritual and material pursuits. Self-interests and public values are drawn apart from each other. Civic values perceived by people gradually fade away, leading to divided interests, mistrust, moral decline, and social insecurity, sharply contrasting with the concept of mutual dependence of the Confucian communal life and life of the socialist collective. Boyte pointed out a consequence of modernization and commercialization is that people's life has been segregated into private clubs, the symbol of the privilege and social class distinction, which in turn leads to the reduction of public work.

Besides the impact of the consumer culture and social injustice, the traditional role of education in cultivating personality also faces the challenge in social transition, such as modernization, fast urbanization, and rising right-conscious individuals. Freedom released from economic development and interactions with the world generate new meanings of the self-pursuit. On one hand, there is a growing need for diversified self-expression and self-realization replacing the need of conforming to the imposed standard and values. On the other hand, fast urbanization, to a large degree, demolishes local traditions and cultures that anchor an individual's existence, and leads to the increased sense of uprootedness, dislocation, and anonymity among the young working class. Altruism and the civic agenda of sacrificing oneself for the construction of modern China hardly encompass citizens' awakening consciousness toward individual rights amid complicated and intensified social issues. In other words, in the process of modernization, China witnesses the dissolution and dysfunction of traditional civic values that used to serve as guidance to organize the Confucian communal life and the socialist collective. A new civic agenda and vision of the commonwealth need to be created to

accommodate modern challenges. In 2012, the “China Dream” delivered by President Xi highlighted the perseverance and advancement of the Chinese tradition and spirit as the new public agenda (Yang & Norman-Major, 2015). However, the question regarding how to prepare students for the democratic construction and rejuvenation of the nation in modern China remains unaddressed. Configuring new way of citizenship is on the call to meet modern challenges and new agendas of constructing the commonwealth. Higher education, in turn, plays a significant role in nurturing the new citizenship for a smooth social transition.

The Democratic Tradition of Education during the Awakening Era

The democratization of education serves as the transforming force for citizen’s development and social change. In the period of social crisis, institutions are birthplaces for democratic enlightenment and movements for social change. Chinese civic intellectuals have long recognized the importance of the democratic role of education to transform individuals into qualified citizens to build the nation. Yan Fu and Liang Qichao were representatives of early civic reformers of education in the late Qing dynasty when China fell prey to the foreign invasion and colonization. Yan Fu criticized “selfishness, hypocrisy, and servility” as defects of Chinese people under the rule of feudal dictatorship (as cited in Xu, 2013, p.28). Comparing the subject mentality in Chinese society with the civic mentality in the western societies, Yan Fu proposed to save the nation from perils through three-pronged education, “strengthening the physique of people, developing the intelligence of people, and developing new ethics of people” (as cited in Xu, p. 28). New ethics referred to the Western democratic concept of freedom, equality, and fraternity, replacing the traditional Chinese patriarchal hierarchy (Xu).

Similarly, Liang Qichao proposed the concept of “nationals” and the “new people” to reform Chinese education (as cited in Xu, 2013, p.29). “Nationals” are those who “shall govern their own country, enact laws of the country, work for the benefits of the country, and protects the country from threats.”(as cited in Xu, p.29) Liang described personal traits of the “new people” as “the awareness of state, the awareness of rights and responsibilities, the political awareness, social ethics, and philosophy of freedom” (as cited in Xu, p.29). To Liang, enlightenment meant the courage to use one’s own reason, and school should teach students how to reason. He remarked:” If we want China to be strong, we should have more talents; to have more talents, we must open schools and academics to educate them.”(as cited in Xu, p.252) Like Liang, the early civic reformers believed that intellectuals had the mission of supervising the government and guiding the public. Institutions and schools should play an essential role in nurturing civic life and the public sphere.

The strategy of early reformists was to awaken the rest of the nation through the influence of the academia that was well-educated and enlightened by the modern concept of democracy and science. Xu (2011) observes Chinese public spheres are centered upon aristocratic intellectuals from the very beginning, not bars, cafes, saloons, but newspapers, institutions, and schools. This strategy can be regarded as an adjustment of the traditional role of Confucian scholars, the gentlemen gentry, who are supposed to guide public and supervise the ruler. The urgency to save the country from the national crisis helped reformists gain the support from Guangxu emperor and initiate the Hundred Day’s Reform, which called for institutional and ideological transformation to strengthen China rather than just through developing commerce

and technology. Although the reform encountered stubborn resistance and was eventually suppressed by the conservative faction under Empress Dowager Cixi, it laid the seed of modern democratic movements and civic education in China. In 1905, the imperial examination system was abolished, and the concept of citizenship and the rule of law to protect civil rights began to emerge in China (Xu, 2013). In 1911, the outbreak of Xinhai Revolution led by Sun Yat-sen, consisting of a series of uprisings, overthrew China's last imperial dynasty and established the Nanjing Provisional Government of the Republic of China (Xu, 2013).

During the era of the Republic of China, more thorough educational reforms had been carried out to correspond to the Three Principles of the People proposed by Sun Yat-sen, who was influenced by his experiences in the United States, especially by Abraham Lincoln's thought of "government of the people, by the people, and for the people (Xu, 2013). The Three Principles of the People was summarized as 1) nationalism (*minzu zhuyi*), the principle of a self-strengthening and united nation, independent from the imperialist domination; 2) democracy (*minquan zhuyi*), the rights and the political power of people; and 3) people's livelihood and welfare (*minsheng zhuyi*) (Columbia University, n.d.). According to Sun, nationals should be educated to become masters of the Republic, who would be patriotic and know how to participate in national affairs. He stated, "To sustain the Republic, a local government must enhance people's intelligence, improve their morale, and make them see that the Republic is promising." (as cited in Xu, p. 31) Citizens in Sun's theory possess the characteristics of political quality, public spirits, and a balance of rights and responsibilities. Similar to the early reformists, Sun proposed to add elements of democracy and patriotism to moral education and uphold

freedom, equality, and fraternity (Xu, 2013). His objective was to help citizens overcome the servility and develop an independent personality with public-spiritedness as the new character. Following Sun's reform, Cai Yuanpei was the first educationist to advocate the development of all-rounded characters through militarism education, utilitarianism education, civic moral education, world-view education, and aesthetic education (Xu, 2013). Civic education was the basis for reforming the national character and developing a wholesome personality, which included personal-social and humanitarian ethics, rational judgments, the pursuit of spiritual and ideological freedom, and the concept of modern citizens (Xu, 2013).

Around the period of the May Fourth Movement in 1911, civic education had been expanded to people's daily living, resulting in a more revolutionary concept of citizenship and modernization. Progressive thinkers like Li Dzhao, Lu Xun, and Chen Duxiu promoted individual emancipation and democracy through changing people's lifestyle and daily practice (Xu, 2013). They urged public to reform folk customs, marriages, and family; to popularize vernacular literature; and to make innovation in art, music, science, technology, and legal system (Xu, 2013). Lu Xun is well-known for his scathing tone of criticizing the deep-rooted shortcomings of the national character of Chinese people as a result of subjection to thousands-year feudal dictatorship. Based on Lu Xun, character defects, such as servility, political apathy, self-deception, timidity, laziness, and hypocrisy, hindered Chinese people from being real humans and a truly independent nation (Xu, 2013). He remarked, "For all ignorant people, no matter how healthy or how strong they are, they can only serve as meaningless exhibits and onlookers. We need not feel miserable for them when they die of illness. The most

important thing, therefore, is to change their spirit.” (as cited in Xu, 2013, p. 34)

Under the backdrop of the civic renaissance, several organizations emerged and played an important role in developing civic education in the early 20th century of China. In 1922, the China Education Improvement Society held its first annual meeting in Jinan, adopted the proposal of Change of Moral Education Curriculum to Citizen Curriculum, and made civic education an independent discipline (Xu, 2013). In 1924, Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) commenced the promotion of civic education and launched Civic Campaign Week, with the focus on citizens’ self-governance, patriotism, awareness of community, and democratic life (Xu, 2013). Under the influence of YMCA, Jiangsu Education Association organized civic seminars and issued eight creeds as the code of conduct of general citizens. The eight creed included “develop the ability of self-governance, foster the spirit of mutual help, uphold fair competition, observe public order, fulfill statutory obligations, respect public property, keep public hygiene, and develop international sympathy.” (as cited in Xu, 2013, p. 35)

Civic reforms and movements in the early modern period of China rose as a response to the national crisis resulted from the faltering feudal system and foreign invasions. Democratic pioneers were well aware of the root cause of the backwardness of Chinese nation and insightfully acknowledged the democratic role of education in transforming citizens and strengthening the country. They made a significant contribution to paving the way for China’s democratization and modernization and had the remarkable influence on developing and implementing civic education in the new society of socialism under Mao Zedong Thought. The concept of people as the masters of a society has been carried forward as the fundamental

principle of the socialist democracy until today. The success of the early civic reform can be attributed to its connection to the political reality that severely affected people. Instead of serving as an ideological doctrine or official rhetoric, civic education proposed by revolutionary pioneers aimed to empower people with democratic citizenship through engaging them with national issues and public affairs. The valiant and sagacious democratic initiatives built strong allegiance and a revolution base and opened a new chapter of Chinese nation toward the road of sovereignty, liberation, equality, human rights, cooperation, and a new collectivism.

The Diminishing Animating Spirit of Higher Education

As a tradition, character development and transformation of individuals are the main purpose of education in China. However, after the protest of the Tiananmen Square student movement in 1989, democracy appears to be a sensitive word and is regarded as the disguise of western infiltration. Civic education recedes back to moral and political education, with a focus on knowledge acquisition and ideological preaching rather than its animating power of transforming students with new democratic concepts and practices. Civic education in contemporary China has become an equivalent to ideological and political education with a grand purpose of developing qualified builders and reliable successors for the socialist cause (Jiang & Xu, 2013). Confronting modern challenges and moral decline, Chinese central government urges institutions to act immediately to restore humanistic values and moral consciousness of students through enhancing moral-political education and tertiary education of extracurricular activities. Without connecting moral education to the socio-political reality and addressing issues and challenges affecting students' life and their families, civic education

remains as ineffective and unappealing official rhetoric.

For example, in 2004, the CPC Central Committee and State Council issues *The Opinion on Further Enhancing and Improving Ideological and Political Education for College Students* (hereafter refer to *the Opinions*), as the guidance for the new situation (Jiang & Xu, 2013). *The Opinions* allocates paramount importance in developing correct political consciousness of talent as the key to “the implementation of strategy of revitalizing the country and ensuring China’s invincible position in the intense international competition” (Jiang & Xu, 2013). In 2005, *The Guidance on the Implementation of the Opinion* is issued by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee and the Ministry of Education to specify the respective curriculum (Jiang & Xu, 2013). Civic education for undergraduate students includes four compulsory courses, namely Basic Principles of Marxism; Essentials of Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and the Important Concepts of Three Represent; Outline of Contemporary Chinese History; and Ideological and Moral Cultivation and Basics of Law (Jiang & Xu, 2013). Selective courses cover Contemporary World Economics and Politics (Jiang & Xu, 2013). These courses focus on teaching the world view and methodology of Marxism; helping students understand how China has combined the basic principles of Marxism with the Chinese context in its historical development; teaching the essential concepts and adherence to socialism with Chinese characteristics; teaching national history and nationalism; and enhancing students’ awareness of the socialist legal system.

A dilemma exists between the educators’ expectation and students’ perception of the education they receive. On one hand, civic scholars and educationist, as early as 1990s, keep

setting off alarm bells on what they call the general unsettlingly low morality of college student, such as “diminished team awareness and intensified egoism; less eagerness to learn and more desire for pleasure; greater sense of competition and weaker spirit of mutual help; decline in morality and increase in loose behavior” (as cited in Jiang & Xu, 2013, p. 71). To date, some researchers regard the morality of college students is deteriorated (Jiang & Xu, 2013). The Opinion highlights various problems students have, including “loss of political belief, vagueness in ideals and beliefs, distortion in value judgment, lack of integrity, lack of social responsibility, reduced eagerness to live frugality and work hard, weakness in team spirit, and poor mental health” (as cited in Jiang & Xu, 2013, p.71).

On the other hand, studies show that the contemporary China’s approach to civic education is ineffective and poorly received by students (Jiang & Xu, 2013; Tu, 2011.). In a large-sized classroom of civic courses, students are found net surfing, chatting online, napping, and doing English homework (Jiang & Xu, 2013). Students feel the distance between education and practice, and view civic teachings as delusive. A colleague student interviewed, commented on moral and political education he received,

“My moral concepts are all formed through my own life. What is taught in the university is nothing practical but some meaningless and false verbiage such as “serving the people” and “devotion”. The university publicizes exemplary deeds from time to time. While some of them might be true, they are far too distant from my life, and there is nothing I can learn from. Nevertheless, events held by many student societies are enlightening.” (Jiang & Xu, 2013, p.75)

Teachers also lament the difficulty of teaching ideological and political classes. Scholars attribute the ineffectiveness of teaching and the poor reception from students to the following factors: the unreachable and unrealistic objectives, a monotonous teaching approach, and large size of classes (Jiang & Xu, 2013). Chinese universities introduced alternatives of classroom teaching to create interaction and spaces for practices, including community-based service and research, work-study programs, volunteerism, development of campus culture, psychological counseling, and in-depth political guidance (Jiang & Xu, 2013). They also utilize branches of the Party, Youth League organizations, and the Student Union to enhance the implementation of civic education. However, the fundamental role and purpose of education have been neglected, which is to provide transformational learning and experience to students and empower them to be the agents of change for issues that concern them. Higher education should be the laboratory of new democratic concepts and initiatives. Civic education of mainland China is described as political indoctrination and brainwashing, where students are not encouraged to address issues, take actions, and make a change through applying civic learning to practice in their surroundings. Disconnected with political reality, civic education, in general, is feeble to embark student's civic passion and commitment. It remains as a clumsy and ineffective attempt to reserve the so-called moral decline of young people. As a whole, democratic role of schools serving as the public sphere is disappearing, reflected in underdeveloped civic agency of students, such as critical thinking, autonomous personality, and social efficacy.

In 2007, the report of the 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party proposes to enhance civic awareness education and buildup socialist democracy, the rule of law,

freedom, equality, equity, and justice (Wang, 2013). This report can be regarded as a policy adjustment to the democratic trend of globalization and the new situation in China, such as emergence of right-conscious individuals and growing tension of social cleavage. Although democratic elements have been added in the general guidance, civic education is still decontextualized, distant from social issues that affect students and their families. When propagandas of the socialist ideology is the main method of developing campus culture, students are disinterested and disengaged in participating the civic agenda at a school. Some schools and institutions make initiatives to follow the guideline of the national report to animate civic education. However, those efforts are mainly based on research institutions, such as the department of Marxism located in local universities and some newly established centers, including the Education Center for Chinese Citizens and the Yunnan Institute for Civic Education, with a focus on teaching morality and life, morality and society, and politics and ideology (Qin, 2013). Student clubs are the main places for extracurricular activities. A study shows that main reasons that college students become associated with a student club are: networking, accumulating social experience, developing leadership, and helping others. Democracy and social justice are unfortunately missing (TU, 2011). Students are not inspired to think how their experience is connected to democracy and social justice, and how they are going to make a change to have a positive impact on their surroundings. There is a disconnection between what a school has practiced and what the policy actually proposed—the developing socialist democracy, the rule of law, freedom, equality, equity, and justice.

Regarding the prospect of civic education in China, Qin (2013) proposes building a

more scientific, rational, and effective mode of civic education, Qin's approach is based on three modes: cognitive, emotional, and empirical. The cognitive mode refers to experiments of special civic education, which includes incorporation of teaching materials, heuristic teaching, special training offered to teachers, and teaching of leadership agencies. Qin fails to provide specific descriptions of how these new initiatives are going to fill the gap between the intended result and students' actual involvement. It is not clear how students are able to get involved in democratic deliberation and practices under the above-mentioned experiments. The emotional and empirical modes are regarded as effective and innovative approaches to help students develop civic skills and enthusiasm and promote their devotion to the state and the nation in "a subtle way". An example is developing campus culture through promoting traditional Chinese culture by utilizing channels such as broadcasting, campus bulletin networks, newspapers bulletin stands, and publicly posted motto signs. Another example is social outreach with the purpose of accumulating life experience and strengthening civic awareness. According to Qin, the emotional and empirical approach gain greater attention in China.

Cultural promotion along with the teaching of core socialist values is necessary to shape student's civic consciousness in China. However, simply by promoting the tradition and ideology alone, universities will not be able to transform students into civic agents as the builders of the socialist democracy. Tan Chuan Bao (2013) argues for the importance of human transformation from subject mentality to citizen mentality for social modernization in China. Civic education, in Tan's words, is the dynamic force for human transformation. Tan proposes educational democratization through the institutional arrangement, curriculum provision, activity

design, and teacher-student relations. Tan's vision is to create traditional citizens compatible with the hallmark of a modern democratic and legal society. However, his model is based on teaching students to fit in and lacks analysis of how the transformation is going to occur and how the designed program is going to connect students' engagement to daily politics. Therefore, Tan's proposal appears oratorical and less convincing. Traditional moral education needs to be incorporated into the concept and practice of democracy to re-establish and enhance the sense of agency in individuals and recover the vitality of civic life, where the collective and individuals mutually enrich each other.

In 2012, President Xi delivers the "China Dream" of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and sets up the guideline for the public agenda. The "China Dream" highlights the perseverance and advancement of the Chinese tradition, the commonwealth of 56 nationalities, the mutuality between individuals and the collective, and equality and social justice. China, like other countries in the world, is undergoing a critical transition and is confronted with challenges from globalization, the consumer culture, growing issues of public welfare, a worsening environment, and the dysfunction of the tradition and political system. David Mathew argues, "that to address proactively the enormous changes that taking place, higher education needs to make use of its history as a movement in support of the great democratic movements in American"(as cited in Boyte, 2015, May 10). To develop qualified citizens as the key to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in the global context, the democratic role of higher education must be recovered. In the period of civic renaissance, schools and institutions serve as the public sphere for civic awakening and deliberation. Students took an active role as democratic pioneers

and were motivated to lead the revolution to transform the nation. The critical situation in current China calls for the recovery of the animating spirit of higher education to form new civic agenda and prepare students to become the agent of change, the social entrepreneur of the commonwealth.

Chapter Four

Civic Renewal and Development of Civic Professionals

The “China Dream” depicts a blueprint of the mutual empowerment of the collective and individuals, and serves as a national call for reconstructing democracy as a way of collective life. It echoes the long established civic mission in the light of freedom, equality, and fraternity, which has guided the nation toward democracy and modernization. A convergent review of civic traditions, modern challenges and critical social issues, and the call of the “China Dream”, provides a concrete context to reconfigure Chinese citizenship and the purpose of higher education. Considering the pressing social issues and democratic trend that China is facing domestically and globally, establishing a timely civic agenda needs to consider the following aspects to develop new citizens in line with the call for the rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation

- Restoring and enriching humanistic values in the dynamic of social-economic development, urbanization, and technology advancement, which enable emancipation of mind and at the same time cause tension between the spiritual pursuit and practical materialism.
- Issues and challenges relating to the rising theme of diversity and social equality,

including the inheritance and advancement of cultural and ethnic heritage of 56 nationalities amid the trend of patterned life defined by market economy and the consumer culture; the widening distinction between different classes and issues relates to the privilege; and the emergence of LGBT population (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender);

- In the tension and contention between individuals and the state, the possibility of professional collaboration between citizens and local government to solve deteriorated moral standard and social relations as a result of growing social injustice and inequality.
- Forming the habit of public deliberation, which consist both civic thinking and civic action, to prepare the right-conscious individuals to become productive citizens who are able to align self-interest with public good, competent in political participation and collaboration to make a change;
- Integrating emancipation of mind (the Party line) with the construction of new values of collective life (the commonwealth), and creating public spaces for democratic deliberation and practices that channel the rising need of self-expression and overcome the limitation of the Confucian apolitical approach and rhetorical and conforming nature of the socialist politics.

The renewed civic agenda requests a broad dimension of public work and the active participation of professional citizens. The purpose of a broadened democratic dimension of public work is to fully release the power of collective agency, capacities of citizens with the

diverse background, to build democracy as a way of better life. Recognizing the value of “do what you can”, the broaden dimension of public work refashions the definition of social efficacy and all-rounded talents. It aims to tear down the wall of privilege and power and recover people’s pride and confidence to be the agents of the meaning, purpose, and values of their own living environment. A self-governed body of citizens will be able to withstand the manipulation of external forces, such as the impact of the consumer culture and urbanization, and fight determinedly for social justice. In the broadened dimension of public work, the relation between self-actualization and common good are reconstructed and better connected. The revitalization of public work will help to realize the mutuality between individuals and the collective, improve interpersonal relationships, and strengthen the civic fabric of Chinese society. When robust civic energy is generated, a harmonious society with a rich display of humanity and morality can be expected.

The renewed agenda of democratization through public work depends on developing civic professionals, who are equipped not only with the civic mentality but also the capacity of participating in politics and solving problems through collaborative efforts (Boyte, 2015, August). Different from gentlemen of the Confucian tradition, civic professionals are agents of action, who are inspired by ever renewed concept of democracy and aim to have an impact on a social change. Civic professionals are not civic role models of altruism in the socialist tradition. They are sharp in political critique, firm in democratic beliefs instead of a political stance, and able to connect self-interest to the public good. Their autonomous personality is not only morally cultivated, but also politically trained and equipped. Different from the motivating slogan “do

what you can to contribute”, social efficacy of civic professionals is more about “do what you can to make a change”. In short, civic professionalism adds a new dimension to the concept of collective agency based on the Confucian and socialist tradition, a dimension which is critical to the construction of new democracy in China. The following section is going to look at the concept and development of civic professionals in the Chinese context.

The Concept of Civic Professionals

Developing civic professionals is closely related to the revitalization of public work. Under the framework of public work, civic professionals differ from “the citizen as a legal and rights-bearing voter at the heart of liberal political frameworks; and from the citizen as a volunteer at the center of communitarian frameworks (Boyte, 2015, August).” The concept of citizen professionals emphasizes people’s role as co-creators in problem solving and producing public good and requires an expanded political arena, where the ordinary people can take lead and collaborate with each other. The concept of civic professionals reflects a broadened definition of democracy, not just in terms of electoral system and tolerance for resistant politics (Boyte, 2015, August). The system of electoral democracy allows people to select a right leader. However, it also indicates a kind of dependent mentality in politics of letting the legendary leader magically fix various social problems. Besides the citizen’s passive and vulnerable position as voters, their allegiance and enthusiasm for the new leadership may evaporate quickly and turn into a cynical disillusion when the latter fails to address a certain complex issue or meet their immediate and diverse interest. With protests, citizens vent grievances toward abuses and failures of an established system, and may put some pressure on government for a more transparent

operation and less arbitrary decision-making. However, the reactionary, resistant, and outrageous protest need to be channeled into a profound collaborative action to avoid interruptive movements and zero-sum politics and to develop constructive and sustainable work for cultural and systematic transformation. Through analyzing movements occurring in the world, like Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring, and the Turkish protests in 2013 against the president, Erdogan, Zukerman points out the limitation of resistant protests and elections in forming combative and sustainable force to achieve a tangible systemic change, as he comments: “We can oust bad people through protest and elect the right people and put them in power, we can protest to pressure our leaders to do the right things, and they may not be powerful enough to give us the changes we really want” (as cited in Boyte, 2015, August). Similarly, Laura Grattan (2012) argues for the combination of the genuine critique of populist resistance with everyday populism (grassroots politics, aiming at strengthening civic capacity of people and local institutions) to invent new practice, which is capable of both “dehabituating actors from being quite so responsive to the demands of a given order and re-habituating them to adopt dispositions toward critique and radical actions.” Boyte’s theory of public work, consisting free spaces, collaboration, agency, and the commonwealth, represents civic studies as an intellectual component of civic renewal and provides a concrete approach to transform raw and genuine sentiment of protestors and joint efforts of volunteers and community organizers into the formation of sustainable work of savvy civic professionals, who are collaborators of government and active agents of change, instead of antagonists and the object of change. Free space is the liberation zone for people to reflect values, define problems, polish critique, and

refresh democratic thinking. Through collaborations based on the daily collective life in a community, people develop common agenda and local stewardship and are inspired to live and work in the light of their democratic imagination.

China has long been categorized as an authoritarian state, hostile to democratic movements, including freedom of speech, resistant protests, and general elections. With the narrow definition of democracy, the land of mainland China appears sterile in producing democratic citizenship. The concept of civic professionals, derived from the critique of both distributive politics (focusing on the distribution of social wealth in the prospect of social justice) and generative politics (based on people's role as the co-creators), provides a new vantage of democratic configuration and a feasible alternative to revitalize civic life in China.

Firstly, developing civic professionals serves as a proactive response to the call for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The "China Dream" depicts a renewed vision of the commonwealth, the abundant collective life and culture, and provides a broad platform for individual's self development. Fulfillment of each newly established sub-agenda of the "China Dream" require nation-wide collaborative efforts and participation of every individual. As it is analyzed in previous chapters, China has a rich civic tradition in Confucianism that stresses developing autonomous personality and social efficacy in accordance with moral values that profoundly shapes dispositions of citizens and their pursuit of humanity in Chinese society. In socialism, promotion of the mutuality between individuals and communities based on the people's communes connects the Confucian tradition to a democratic life and help the ordinary people develop a strong sense of collective agency in their own living environment. Even though

there is sensibility to politically active movements organized outside the Party's supervision, grassroots-based associational life is rich and robust in China, ranging from the collective square dancing, calligraphy clubs, religious gathering, collaborative work for different ceremonies and festivals in a village, to various local charity group and volunteer activities. The culture of self-organizing and a collective life is deeply rooted in Chinese society and provides breeding grounds for different dimensions of public work and the development of civic professionals. Provided proper training and platform, Chinese citizens will be able to transform their cultural intelligence and accomplishment into political acumen and play an active role in revitalizing public life and social change.

Secondly, the concept of civic professionals focuses on productive and sustainable social consequence through collaborative relationships and serves as a strategic approach to start breaking zones of politically sensible issues relating to systematic flaws, structural inequality, power relations, and the legitimacy of authority and public policy. It buffers tension between a radical political reform or movement and the centralized leadership with the priority of social stability. China is regarded as a soft-authoritarian state, and paternalism has been institutionalized and reinforced due to the influence of the Confucian and socialist political culture. It does not support resistant movements as the mobilizing force for democracy to change the established system and social order. Governance of a soft-authoritarian state is based on moral capacity developed through practicing traditional values and virtues. Both the ruler and the subject need to demonstrate moral strength to claim the legitimacy and protection. For example, leaders need to demonstrate virtues of benevolence, discernment, and integrity to establish their

authority and allegiance; and the subordinate obtains trust and protection from leaders through demonstrating allegiance, diligence, and resoluteness. In another word, there seems to be a preference for a mutually trusted and dependent relationship between the state and the society over confrontation or enmity that has been regarded as social dissonance and purposefully avoided. Given the diversified landscape and immense population, China prioritizes stability as the premise for social development. Lacking a strategic dialogue, raw and impetuous protests seem to be the trigger of social uprising and disturbance. Direct promotion of resistant politics, without considering a partnership with a government, will encounter the latter's forceful intervention due to the concern of social security. Instead of venting resentment and demonizing a government, citizen professionals strategically work with governmental authorities to analyze the political situation, identify problems, reframe issues, adjust strategies and objectives based on the dynamic of politics, and explore solutions that stand for the common good. Through the process of talking, learning, negotiating, bargaining, and sharing, both sides develop mutual understanding and collaboration.

In 2014, a disobedience movement, known as the Umbrella Movement, occurred in Hong Kong as a protest against the decision made by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC), regarding the proposed reform of the Hong Kong Chief Executive election in 2017 (McCarthy, 2014). Protesters demanded full universal suffrage versus NPCSC's proposal of electing two or three candidates before presenting them for a territory-wide ballot by ordinary voters. Lingnan student leaders slammed the proposal of NPCSC as a sign of the Party's political interference through a restrictive prescreening system and held unyielding resistance to

alternatives. Protestors blocked main business districts for almost three months, causing the traffic jam, school closures, a financial loss to local businesses, and disruption of the daily life of ordinary citizens. Rifts occurred between the "yellow" (pro-occupy) versus the "blue" (anti-occupy)" participants, and between apolitical parents and the galvanized youth (Dearden, 2014). When the radical group gained an upper hand over the moderates and started a direct and confrontational protest action, the movement escalated into "a series of nasty confrontations, encountering pepper spray and tear gas from the police and attacked by the anti-occupation protesters (Bradsher, K. & Buckley, 2014). Lacking space for a reasonable and constructive dialogue between protestors, officials, and the third party, the movement was caught in an unhappy and unresolved ending. Protestors remained bitter and resentful, and government officials in Hong Kong and Beijing, in turn, reinforced its strict censorship on democratic space for protests and movements. Spurred by radical sentiment, resistant movements usually led to a simple "state-and-society dichotomy", with little help in understanding and approaching issues of constructing democracy in both mainland China and Hong Kong. The anti-Beijing and anti-mainland sentiment was hovering, leading to the eruption of the Fishball revolution, a riot resulting in 44 police injuries and 24 arrests, on the eve of the Chinese New Year, 2016 (Macauley & Timmons, 2016). These two incidents serve as a venue to reflect significance of developing civic professionals in China, who possess a comprehensive understanding of democracy as public work, not just resistance and elections. Civic professionals are shrewd in adjusting objectives and actions to create spaces for a constructive conversation with authorities and maintain a positive status and influence in society.

Finally, the theory of civic professionalism is compatible with the cultural context and social reality of China. Developing civic professionals under the framework of public work is based on the civic tradition of a society, and resorts to self-initiated efforts of a local community to refashion its collective life and culture through cultivating new social consciousness and habits. The development of civic professionals overlaps the Confucian and socialist's belief in that the work and wisdom of local people are the repositories of civic energy and fundamental base of humanity. Based on a broadened understanding of politics as part of the daily life, public work helps to develop the capacity of individuals and communities in collaborative efforts to create a better life as well as to cope with modern challenges and social issues that affect humanistic values, interpersonal relationships, quality of life, personal development, and social harmony. China is in great need of developing civic strength of the ordinary people to solve its acute social issues, especially at the township level and in remote areas. Those issues include but are not limited to drastic social inequality and injustice, arbitrary practices and corruption of local authorities, growing public distrust in local government, disappearing and diminished ethnicities and local cultures, environmental pollution and ecological destruction, and the high rate of kidnapping of children and women.

Since 2005, China has witnessed the escalated tension between the agents of local authorities and residents. *Chengguan*, the urban management officers, are hired by city governments to tackle low-level crime in urban areas, such as traffic violations and unauthorized street vendors. Lack of proper training and regulation, *Chengguan* are notorious for their brutal and violent enforcement toward the underprivileged peddlers, causing public outrage and

rebellion (Armstrong, 2012). In several extreme cases, confronting the forced eviction by the demolishing team of a local government, desperate villagers committed self-immolation, lighting themselves on fire with gasoline, as a way to protect their lands from the imposed expropriation and unfair treatment (Hays, 2015). Lacking civic infrastructure to resolve the issue, the underprivileged had to play the game of “an eye for an eye” to encounter the coercion of the local authority. Some residents captured the scenario and posted it on the popular Sina Weibo microblogging platform and Tencent Wechat (the largest standalone messaging apps) in the hope to draw the public attention and receive intervention from a higher level of government. Each outrageous incident spread quickly through the social media and, to some degree, formed public censorship and put some strains on local authorities. However, it also stirred public agitation and skepticism toward government through inflamed remarks, as Lubman (2013) observes: “in the age of Weibo, average citizens are reacting with increased vigor as each case of abuse emerges.” He further comments that “Chinese citizens’ anger has been stoked to dangerous levels by reports of urban management officers, or *chengguan*, employing extreme violence against street vendors.

While the ticking bomb of China’s urban para-police can be attributed to lacking a specific law of power restriction, the gap of civic literacy among average citizens, local authorities, and enforcement agents, requires immediate attention and action to solve the growing social tension between the state and society as a result of abuse of power, lack of professional operations in the governmental system, and disempowerment and estrangement of the public. Average citizens need to be equipped with civic professionalism to channel their impetus

resentment into political reasoning and strategic actions to address social injustice with collaborative efforts. Equipped with political acumen, ordinary citizens will definitely push the political reform to help the government play a professional and civic role to match up with the democratic trend in the world. The developing civic professionals meets the call for self-governance of a local community through strengthening civic capacities of local institutions and the people, which will, in turn, pave the way for China's cultural and political transition from subject mentality to civic mentality, and realize the best combination of the Confucian moral reflection with democratic practices.

Three Dimensions of Developing Civic Professionals

The development of civic professionals, imbedded in the vision of a better society, is closely tied with the democratic role of higher education. Robust civic energy comes from growing social capital, consisting of transformational institutions and active citizens. Institutions, an important catalyst for the social and cultural change, should serve as the laboratory of democratic enlightenment and practices. The revitalization of the campus culture and the development of civic professionals require the paradigm shift from "college-ready" to higher education becoming "student-ready" (Boyte, 2015, May). The college-ready mode of education aims to teach students to fit into various disciplines and programs and prepare them for existing jobs. Social excellence under this type of education is elitism-based and measured by personal achievement. A typical and world dominant example of the college-ready education is the international rankings like the UK World University Rankings or the Shanghai 100 rankings, which define the excellence of institutions and students. Based on Boyte (2015, May), the elitism

has recast higher education as a “winnowing machine” to select the so-called best and brightest. He further points out the college-ready education fails to recognize the diverse backgrounds of students and to engage them with their different potentials. Emphasizing individualist achievement, it generates great inequality among students and a strong social class performance gap. On the contrary, the concept of the student-ready education aims to “free the powers” of students to solve problems and build a democratic community (Boyte, 2015, May). Students are engaged in developing, employing, and living in a status of civic agency to address issues, produce public achievement, and contribute to a better way of collective life. In the process of developing and practicing civic agency, students are able to build autonomous personality, explore their passionate interests, cultivate aesthetic values, and foster close interpersonal relationships. Accordingly, the social excellence of the student-center education is measured by civic agency, the combination of refined personality and social efficacy in the Chinese context.

The paradigm shift reflects the innovation of today’s higher education in responding to global issues that each society is facing now. Higher education plays a critical role in developing civic professionals, who are going to apply relational, cultural, and humanistic intelligence to solve human problems and are independent from a patterned way of living prescribed by the hierarchical power, technocracy, or business tycoons. China has a rich educational tradition that holds strong values of humanity, morals, aesthetics, civic agency, and public good. Those values are well illustrated in the national policy of moral-political teaching. However, teachings of ideology, morals, and humanity need to be incorporated with democratic inspiration and practices in order to create a supportive context that continuously help students to exercise and

release their civic power.

The approach of developing civic professionals and the shift to the student-ready education can be understood in three dimensions described by Boyte: civic identity, politics, and free spaces. The first principle of developing civic professionals is re-growing civic identity (2015, August). Civic identity is the revolutionary, awaking and pioneering spirit of higher education. With civic identities, schools connect education programs to local communities and the larger society and play an active role in addressing various social issues, like the impact of urbanization, social cleavage, class discrimination, erosion of cultures and traditions, and money worshiping. Students and teachers are directly involved in issues that concern them and are able to take actions to make a change. The civic identity of higher education is based on respect for a broadened definition of the talents and intelligence of the ordinary people. Motivated under their civic identity rather than being detached and neutral in a disciplinary identity, students and teachers are profoundly and genuinely passionate about social justice and keep a strong desire to achieve democratic excellence. Historically, the civic identity can be reflected in the continuous reforms of Confucianism, grassroots rebellions against a ruthless emperor, the democratic movements in the period of civic renaissance represented by the May Fourth movement in 1911, and the civic refashioning with the promotion of the “Five Loves” under the new socialist society. Those movements, like the civil rights movement in the American society, formed the soul and animating spirit of institutions and higher education.

Recovery of the civic identity of higher education requires the inclusion of politics to overcome the decontextualized classroom teaching, to spark students’ civic passion, and to

strengthen their political intelligence with critical thinking and skills of problem-solving.

According to Byote (2015, August), the inclusion of politics is to teach students “to make change through negotiation, bargaining, and accommodation of diverse interests, beginning the ‘the world as it is’ and involving a keep appreciation of power dynamic. Bernard Crick (1962) defines politics is a process of reconciling diverse interests and values, rather than ideological unity that usually represses the quality of plurality. True to Bernard’s argument, ideological preaching with the overwhelming demand for political conformity in the Chinese education system has smothered the awakening spirit and critical thinking of students, affects their autonomous personality, and makes politics and socialistic belief a notorious word rather than sources of democratic inspiration. The power dynamics is an essential element in understanding the root cause and exploring workable solutions to social issues that affect people’s living. Understanding the power dynamics teaches students how to identify key stakeholders, who have the major influence on a situation and look for possibilities and strategies for collaborative efforts.

Democratic renewal and construction are a process of continuously liberating people from repressions of the established social-economic order and social injustice. Students usually feel committed to a new democratic agenda through reflecting political reality and systematic flaws. Ability to talking about politics and acting on it is the key to generating civic vigor on campus. Unfortunately, civic education in China has been insulated from addressing political reality and the dynamics of power. It has limitation in sparking students’ democratic imagination, helping them to stay bold for social justice, and equipping them with civic skills that are needed to become civic professionals.

In fact, China is not alone to exclude politics from civic learning. A study shows that “devoid of politics” is common in a vast majority of school-based service learning and community service programs, which often promote service, not democracy (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Similar to Boyte’s argument for the important role of higher education in shaping democracy, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) argue that the narrow and conservative conception of citizenship and learning programs are not the result of “arbitrary choices” or “pedagogical limitation”, but rather “political choices with consequences”. They describe three kinds of citizens. The first kind is a personally responsible citizen, who “works and pays taxes, obeys laws, and helps those in need during a crisis such as snow storms or flood” (Westheimer & Kahne). Improvement of character and personality, such as integrity, self-discipline, and hard work, is the focus of this type of civic education. Civic education and formation of citizenship in China belong to this category. The second kind is a participatory citizen who “actively participates in civic affairs and the social life of communities at local, state, and national levels” (Westheimer & Kahne). There is a focus on teaching how government and institutions work and the importance of planning and organizing efforts to help those in need. This model of citizen development is typical among American universities, but underdeveloped on Chinese campuses, due to its hierarchical administrative system, sensibility to organizing culture, and the politics of conformity. The third type is a justice-oriented citizen, who “calls explicit attention to matters of injustice and to the importance of pursuing social justice”...who “critically assesses social, political and economic structures”...and who “addresses root causes of problems and works out collective strategies for a change” (Westheimer & Kahne). Civic education that aims to develop

justice-oriented citizens shifts the attention from promoting charity and service to teaching social movements and strategies to affect systemic change. Developing personality and character is important to being a good citizen. However, it is inadequate to strengthen the civic capacity of institutions and citizens to cope with challenges of complex social issues and to safeguard democracy in the modern world. The sheer focus on charity and kindness usually distracts attention from the root cause of social problems and injustice. Without being related to a broad political context, education of personal responsibility, service, and character improvement risks “advancing civility or docility” instead of democratic citizenship.

Westheimer and Kahne’s shrewd criticism of charity-personality based citizenship hit the weak spot of Chinese civic education. Early democratic revolutionists called for the transformation of Chinese people from subject mentality to civic mentality. They addressed systematic flaws and cultural trammels of the Confucian-feudal society. Under their influence, students and young people became the front line of organizing movements of a social change. In modern China, that radical and pioneering spirit of academia is unfortunately missing and replaced by the for-profit industrialization of higher education. Due the decline of civic morale as a result of the privilege of power and money and the deep-ingrained hierarchical political culture, the mentality of the subject and onlookers still persists in China, To address the severity of challenges that China is experiencing in a critical period of social transition, citizens need to be educated and empowered to move from a submissive and apolitical position to an active role of participation. Therefore, politics must be included in civic education. Politics, referred here, is neither ideological teaching that aims for unifying thinking and actions, nor the promotion of a

bitter class struggle with the purpose of demonizing a certain group of people or government, like the ten-year long turbulent Great Cultural Revolution in China. Rather, it refers to the work of reconstruction through critically analyzing reality as a result of the interplay of social, economic, and political forces and through collaboratively working together for solutions. It is public work with the purpose of engaging people as the masters of change and co-creators of the commonwealth so each individual self can thrive (Boyte, 2011),.

Free spaces. Recovering the democratic identity of higher education and inclusion of politics for all levels of civic engagement require free spaces, which is the third dimension of the development of civic professionals. Draw on the American history of democratic movements, such as the populist Farmers' Alliances of the 1880s, labor struggles in 1930s, feminist movements, and civil rights movements in 1960s, Evans & Boyte (1986) define free spaces "are places in which powerless people have a measure of autonomy for self-organization and engagement of alternative ideas" (Boyte, 2010, p. 61) and for developing democratic skills and habits. Free spaces refer to safe and vibrant public gatherings, where people come together to learn and understood concentered stories from each other, discuss issues that touch their daily life, deliberate over politics, set up common agenda, and work out strategies. Free spaces are independent from prevalent norms or imposed rules and are not subjected to coercion of any form of power. A free space allows people to talk about politics and take their stance without fear. Free spaces are the operational space for democratic reasoning and actions. In free spaces, individuals are exposed to different ideas, gain insights of democratic possibility, reflect clashing values of tradition and modernity, reconstruct interpersonal relationships, and accumulate skills

and wisdom of working together to defend social justice and equal rights.

Based on Evans and Boyte's (1986) argument, free spaces are not social movements aiming for acquisitive individualism but are deeply rooted in communal values with a broad and long-term purpose of replenishing the collective life. In free spaces, people reflect themselves in an interconnected relationship amid change, threats, progress and opportunities, and act together in a way that is habitual to them. Forming free spaces is compatible with the model of Confucian citizenship and the concept of constructing democracy of the socialist collective with the Chinese characteristic. The model of Confucian citizenship is a continuous inquiry of life, including meanings, values, and purpose of life, in the relation to others. Free spaces allow individuals to integrate moral reflection with democratic concept and reconstruct the context of the relationships, where the self is connected to others. From the cultural perspective, the associational life is rich in Chinese society. Free spaces will help to connect the associational life to the arena of politics and engage individuals in various occasions and dimensions of public work for the replenishment of self in the abundance of a spiritual and material life, the Chinese way of democracy.

Free spaces exist in all cultures and societies and are not alien to Chinese society. Similar to the American civil rights movement, churches, schools, friends' circles, and family gatherings serve as liberation zones for Chinese civic movements in late 1890s to early 1990s. In fact, throughout the history of the Chinese civilization, replacements of different dynasties have been marked with self-organized grassroots movements against ruthless despots or ruling classes. Free spaces are indispensable to modern Chinese society to recover humanistic values and

address various social issues and inequality under the influence of the consumer culture. Fast urbanization and the trend of modernity have gradually wiped out the primitive and authentic culture and ethnicity of a local community in China. The consumer culture converts individuals into a brand-defined identity, vacant of the need and strength of self-definition. There is tension between assimilating to the mainstream culture and reserving originality of individuals. Evans and Boyte (1986) argue free spaces are “the environments in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtues” (p. 17). In free spaces, individuals are engaged in reflection of humanistic values against outside erosive forces that devalue and marginalize local life, ethnicity, and stewardship of ordinary people. Therefore, free spaces empower ordinary people to explore and restore values that are defined within themselves and within the community.

Free spaces function as an effective approach to political socialization. It parallels situated learning, scaffolding, and perspective training, three essential elements of the theory of political development defined by McIntosh and Youniss (2010) who argue that acquisition of democratic practices and political acumen is through doing, instead of simply being told what to do and how to do it. Based on situated learning theory, students acquire habits and identities when they become meaningfully involved in a concrete context, a real life setting, like a public life and community of practice. Political discussion, organized youth activities, and collaborative projects are important types of situated learning activities. Scaffolding refers to training, access to a real political system, and support provided by schools, youth programs, community adults, and other institutions to help youth participate in the arena of politics. In accordance with

democratic principles, perspective training requires participants to deliberate, or present their own perspective, listen to other's interests, and negotiate a mutually agreeable decision.

Therefore, free spaces, covering three essential elements of developing political acumen as mentioned above, will serve as an innovative experiment and breeding ground for the cultural change of school governance and civic education. It meets students' need for more autonomous personality and individualized self-expression through helping them to build an ability to stick to and talk about democracy and act on it. The burgeoning free spaces will definitely instill new civic blood in higher education of China and vitalize its campus culture. In a case study of a voluntary service of a secondary school in Hong Kong, Leung (2003) observes that involvement of politics, in terms of social justice, can result in effective service learning and have the positive impact on the personal, interpersonal, and active citizenship development of students. Leung's study shows how a service project, starting with a focus on cleaning a beach near the electric power station in Lung Kwu Tan in Tuen Mun, ends up with a signature campaign in the school against the government policy of building an incinerator in the community." Leung identifies several elements that leads to the transformation, including a) the teachers' high level of policy awareness of social issues, open and flexible personality, and trust in students; b) scaffolding provided by a local nonprofit organization, library; and c) a process of deep group reflection and discussion. Students are able to hear perspectives from both sides (representatives of the villages and the power plant), develop a sense of "skepticism", and move from looking at the surface of issues to understanding deeply root causes of the problem and the action needed for its resolution.

Grounded in democracy as a way of collective life, free spaces will open doors of democratic deliberation for Chinese students, and emancipate them to address different social issues that affect their self-esteem, lifestyle, interpersonal relationships, academic pursuit, and career development in the dynamic of social change and urbanization. In free spaces, students are not subjected to political indoctrination, dogmatism, textbook, and authorities, but are free to address issues that relate to them. Every student stands equally in free spaces, disregarding their parents' background, social connections, and academic standings. Free spaces redefine power relations, break hierarchical lines, and set free students' minds and thoughts. Free spaces contribute to vitalizing classroom teaching and campus culture and lead to better school governance, where students can discuss and take actions on issues that affect campus democracy and social justice.

Free spaces help to foster critical thinking and provide supportive and innovative venue to engage students to learn and practice key components of Chinese citizenship, which includes life inquiry and autonomous personality as the essence of Confucian tradition and the role of masters (civic agents) in the construction of the commonwealth of the socialist collective. Life inquiry is powerless and meaningless for developing autonomous personality if students are not encouraged to relate moral reflection with critical thinking and stay bold for social justice, and if they cringe and withdraw to the conservative spot of onlookers due to lack of support. Civic agency will be severely underdeveloped if students are intimidated to play an active role in talking about and acting on democracy through problem-solving. Cummings and colleagues conducted a survey of educational elites and leaders in 12 Pacific Rim countries, including China,

to investigate reasons for strengthening values education in these societies (as cited by Cogan, et al., 2002). The highest ranked concerns are to “help young persons develop reflective and autonomous personality”, “to provide a foundation for spiritual development”, and “to increase the sense of individual responsibility” (as cited by Cogan, et al., 2002, p. 8). Personal qualities rank as the core of future focus of value education higher than collective concerns such as collective values, community development, and the social and global concerns (Lee, 2009). Cummings’s study suggests a shift in the definition of a good citizen and civic education in Asian societies:

“At the core of values education is the autonomous individual. In the past in many parts of the Pacific Basin, values education tended to be directive—to do this, do that. Individuals were taught social rules and expected to blindly and persistently follow these rules. But the new thinking in the Pacific Basin seems to be to move beyond rules toward a reliance on the judgment of the autonomous individual” (as cited by Cogan, et al., 2002, p. 9).

While reflective and autonomous personality is essential to the development of civic agency, civic education in Asian societies needs to go beyond the enhancement of moral strength of students to the development of a comprehensive set of values and skills that empower students to become the agent of democratic values and practices of their own environment. Peter Levine (2013) points out that “a moral theory is no good unless it has beneficial strategic consequences”, and argues for the integration of facts, values and strategies in producing the civic health index and positive educational outcome of all disciplines. According to Levine, facts of the world, as

complicated as they can be, are data collected through observations, experiences, and experiments. Values guide a person's reasoning process of interpreting and response to facts. Strategies contain skills and plans to change the world through transmitting the facts and values and influencing the process of reasoning of other people. Relating to the integration of facts, values, and strategies to the Chinese context, developing civic professionals as the purpose of higher education includes the following dimensions: to help students to cultivate not only refined personality through moral cultivation and self-perfection, but also an awaking spirit of democracy in the light humanity and social justice; to train students with professional qualities, including professional expertise that forms their career and civic skills of facts and strategies, such as critical reflection, planning, organizing and negotiating; and to continuously engaging students practicing democracy with real life issues to enable them to become problem solvers and entrepreneurs of social transformation.

Integration of facts, values, and strategies requires a school to reform traditional classroom teaching, where "chalk and talk" are the most common teaching approach. Students are passive recipients of knowledge and overshadowed by the request to respect authorities of textbooks, teachers, and school administrators. The operation of free spaces provides concrete solutions to how to change traditional classroom teaching into a vibrant discussion and active practice of agency so as to nurture students' autonomous personality with strong public values. It is a thought-provoking process and leads to forming a new democratic agenda when students are engaged in the reflection of civic tradition as the resource; pressing issues, social reality, and challenges as the setting; and democratic trends as inspiration and opportunities. Through

addressing issues surrounding them, free spaces provide opportunities for students to transform values and theories into actions and practices, and develop the capacity of civic professionals.

Free spaces are the breeding ground for democratic imagination and new practices. It serves as the laboratory of democratic citizenship. Several incidents in recent years show growing tension between students and school administration and send a strong signal that urgently demands educational and administrative reform for better school governance in Chinese higher education. These incidents include a) prestigious Fudan University in China embarrassedly being caught plagiarizing its promotional video “To My Light” for commemorating its 110th anniversary (Liu, 2015); b) the scandal of sexual harassment at Xiamen University, involving history professor Wu Chunming being accused of seducing and raping students (Hiram, 2014); c) storms of criticism from netizens against Jiangxia College’s rejection to a female student with disability (Koshoibekova, 2014); d) and the student sit-in protest, at Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunication, against the school’s decision of relocating them to the remote and poorly facilitated old campus due to the outnumbered recruitment of new students (Miao, 2015).

The feasibility of forming and operating free spaces determines the prospect of the democratic governance of Chinese universities and the shift to the student-centered education. Given the tremendous need for civic renewal in China, free spaces serve as a promising and significant approach to accommodate the emerging individualism and right-consciousness of students, challenges of growing social injustice, and the task of reversing the so-called deteriorated moral quality of the youth. It is significant to explore how to create free spaces in a

centralized education system in China to restore its animating spirit and to improve its governance.

Chapter Five

Creating Free Spaces in a Hidden Curriculum— My Experience

A hidden curriculum is a contextual setting where a student acquires his or her firsthand perception and experience of politics through interacting with other students, teachers, and the school administration. Different from formal or explicit curriculums defined as school subjects, service learning, extra or co-curricular, a hidden curriculum is the overall ethos of a school, a powerful source of civic learning (Cogan, et al., 2002). A hidden curriculum is educators' actual way of doing things in their daily work, who directly affect political socialization of students, either in a centralized school setting ruled by commanding and controlling or in a more reformative and open environment that encourages delegation of teachers and students in creating their own curriculum and school governance. Hidden curriculums are akin to "shadow spaces", described by Patrick Shannon, that "stand apart from the glare of mainstream policy, spaces where educators have room to "experiment, imitate, learn, communicate, and reflect on their actions" (as cited in Boyte, 2016).

In the study of how school factors can influence students' active citizenship in a Chinese context, Leung (2006) identifies three major carriers: a) issue-based teaching with open classroom culture for discussing controversial issues, exchanging opinions, and developing mutual respect for differences; b) experiential education covering social justice; and c) the perceived credibility and likeability of civic teachers by students. A teacher' role, as an important

socializing agent influencing students' active participation, is significant in examining feasibility of creating free spaces in a Chinese school setting. In the Chinese educational tradition, a good teacher educates students about values, guides them in life inquiry, and directly influences them through his or her personal example, choice of values, and manners of teaching. Since teaching method and classroom management is regarded as a kind of idiosyncrasy and the experimental base for innovative and characteristic teachings, teachers usually enjoy discretion of creating their own space to teach values and exert influences, even though their selection of topics is not supportive by the school or the system's formal intention. In daily teaching and supervising work of educators, there exist significant shadow spaces where the democratic dimension of education has been enacted and experimented. Cogan and others observe that teachers commonly teach values and can have a profound effect on students, often without realizing that they are doing so (2002). A Chinese teacher plays multiple roles in educating students, such as a transmitter of knowledge, a role model of values, a parent-like mentor of work, study and life, and a close friend as the safe space for support and confidential talks. Therefore, a teacher can incorporate civic dimension into his or her teaching and create free spaces in and outside classrooms through interacting with students on a daily basis, especially when students tend to develop a close relationship with the teacher who respect their voices. It is common that a teacher becomes friends with students and socializes with them outside campus. Given the fact that Chinese society highly recognizes a good teacher's impact on students, the student-teacher relationship tends to go deeper and last longer.

Hidden curriculums also exist in school administration, which is regarded as a

powerful socializing agent (Leung, 2006), although China implements a centralized education system across all universities. As it is observed, policies from “higher level are more general and abstract, and become more detailed and specific as they get closer to the individual classroom”, and the result is surprisingly “significant range of flexibility ‘on the ground’ within approved parameters” (Li et al., 2004). Overall, regional governments and local colleges enjoy a certain level of freedom in operating the school and deciding specific curriculums in their own way. Feasibility of creating free spaces will increase as Chinese central government recently emphasizes decentralization of decision making for educational innovation and development of “independent characteristics” of each university. On April 2016, addressing a symposium that gathered heads of 53 Beijing-based public and private colleges and universities, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang called for “deepening reforms in the country's education sector in order to better cultivate innovative minds.”(Tian, 2016) As it is reported, Li urged colleges and universities to “focus on raising students' awareness for original innovation and improving their practical capabilities” (Tian, 2016). Three highlights in his speech are noteworthy, which show China’s bent toward the democratization of higher education, as it is quoted here from the Xinhua News Agency:

“Equality of education must be promoted, by providing more favorable policies for rural and impoverished students, so as to level the playground and help them unleash their innovative potentials.... Higher learning institutions should have more decision-making powers for their own operations, and that authorities should delegate more administrative approval powers and cut outdated regulations... Researchers should

have a greater say in the application of their own innovative achievements and a greater share of the proceeds from such applications.”(Tian, 2016)

Although, Premier Li’s speech as general policy guidance does not indicate that China is going to shift to the new paradigm of student-centered education any time soon, his emphasis of unleashing innovative potentials of students and more decision-making powers of local schools shows promising room for creating free spaces as an important democratic approach to deeply reform the educational system in China. More discretion in developing an independent characteristic also indicates the prospect of upgrading the experiential education with free spaces to enhance an institution’s capacity of developing all-rounded talents through engaging students with all levels of public work and citizenship, from volunteers to civic agents.

In the next section, I illustrate my experience of initiating the Experiential English reform as a case study of creating free spaces in shadow spaces existing in the centralized education system of a Chinese college, located in Southwestern China. Originally, the reform was carried out to overcome indolence and monotonousness of the classroom teaching of English and to improve speaking competence of students. With flexibility allowed in English teaching and leaning programs, this reform was able to engage self-interests of students, help them to construct self-expressions with critical thinking, and involve them in the collective work of designing their own curriculums and organizing English learning activities. Through engaging students’ interests and potential, the reform helped students develop a certain sense of agent, the capacity of pursuing social justice and of implementing thoughts into actions, and vitalized the English learning atmosphere and campus culture.

The reform is examined in comparison with my volunteer experience as a coach of Public Achievement, a youth empowerment program initiated by the Center for Democracy and Citizenship then at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs in 1991. The goal of Public Achievement is to educate young people to become effective civic and political actors through finding and creating free spaces where they have room for self-organizing efforts and developing public skills and broader political agency. Boyte describes,

“In Public Achievement, teams of young people work on issues of their choice in real-world settings, whether schools or communities. They meet throughout the year, coached by adults—often college students—who help them develop achievable goals, learn to navigate their local environment, and learn everyday political skills and concept. Public Achievement, based on core concepts of citizen politics, public work, and free spaces, illustrates civic studies in practice.” (2016)

Public Achievement takes an organizing approach, helping young people to develop public values and agency, instead of mobilizing them as solely protestors of individual rights (Boyte, 2016). There is remarkable similarity between Public Achievement and the educational purpose of cultivating masters of the society in China. Both approaches emphasize connection of self-interest and self-autonomy to social efficacy, which is the ability to act and contribute to the collective way of living. Through comparison, I analyze elements important for refashioning Chinese education through operating free spaces to develop collective agency in the perspective of civic studies.

The Experiential English Reform

Prelude. I started my teaching career at the International Business School (IBS) of Yunnan University of Finance and Economics (YUFE) in August 2005. Before that, I had worked for multinational company Philips Electronic Groups (Shen Zhen) as the assistant to the general manager. When I graduated with a master degree in English Language and Literature in 2003, I gave up the teaching position at the School of Foreign Languages of Yunnan University, where I attended my graduate program, and flew to Shen Zhen, one of the most economically developed metropolitans in China. Working as a white-collared professional in a less hierarchical environment of a big international company was my dream. However, in a consumer-culture dominated environment, I experienced frustration when my value was defined by a job description. My consumption capacity largely determined my sense of self-autonomy, which was reflected in the amount of salary I received every month. Everyday, I followed a certain routine and functioned like a tiny, invisible accessory of a big machine. Values that shaped my soul, my disposition, and my enlightenment were not communicated. My self became smaller and obscure when life inquiry of truth and esthetics became unnecessary. I felt a loss of being in touch with humanistic inspiration and struggled to search meanings of my life. On surface, everyone appeared to make a better life with more money in the pocket and capacity to consume. Deep down, there was a growing sense of anonymity experienced by most of us. My college, Sandy Xu, a senior acoustic engineer, told me that that everyday when he woke up the first thing popped up in his mind was “the question of survival”. The pressure of survival and the sense of dislocation were most common to the new settlers in big cities in China. Personality is subdued when the moral and esthetic dimension of life inquiry is reduced to physical and material terms.

This work experience was reversely contradictory to what I had been taught at schools, where I was inspired to “let my personality shine through pursuing truth, compassion, and aesthetics through the work of public values”. I decided to go back to school and assume a teaching position to redefine my social efficacy. Teachers have been regarded as engineers of the human soul in Chinese society, helping students to develop new intelligence of life inquiry for self-refashion. I recognized the significance of the work that would have an impact on students as how my teachers had influenced me. My discomfort with a life dominated by the consumer culture showed how the Chinese education tradition influenced me with its emphasis of moral and esthetic values.

The Experiential English reform started in a conversation with Dean Liu of the school (IBS) when he dropped in my office one day and asked me about strategies to improve student’s English-speaking competence. IBS was established in 2000 as an experiment of providing internationalized education for local Chinese students through partnership with foreign institutions. When I started teaching English at IBS, it had been in partnership with Keuka College of the United States and Charles Sturt University of Australia to offer dual bachelor degrees to undergraduate students. A biggest challenge to these joint programs was low English proficiency of students, especially skills of public presentation, classroom participation, and critical thinking required by the eight core courses lectured by the foreign faculty. In the Chinese education system, English standardized test was mandatory from a middle school to college. English teaching was characterized by monotonous method of cramming, memorizing, and indolent learning atmosphere. As a result, a massively acknowledged problem was “mute

English” across Chinese colleges. Students can read and comprehend English, but cannot speak it well.

Process. I realized the importance of creating a participative environment where students could practice English on a daily basis. To vitalize English learning and participation, students’ self-interest must be engaged, especially when at least half of student population lacked interest in learning English. Self-interest referred to things students were excited or concerned about so that they would like to talk about them. It could be a hobby, an activity of interest, or an issue. I outlined my proposal and requested to present it at a meeting attended by English teachers and teaching administrators of the school. My “entrepreneurial” act of presenting a proposal (the first time that someone outside the management team did) appeared aggressive and idealistic to some of my colleagues of the English department. However, Dean Liu and two teaching administrators gave a very positive comment. Liu declared that the school would give me full support in carrying out the reform. The preparation work took two months and the reform was initiated right away in the following fall semester in 2006. Reflecting back, I was amazed by the “experiential spirit” of Chinese leaders, the willingness to try and the strength to bounce back, as the economic reform under Deng Xiaoping displayed, which was initiated to rehabilitate the nation from the wreck of the Cultural Revolution. This experimental spirit, as an inherited treasure, would give room for free spaces and expansion of public work.

My strategy to carry out the reform was to engage students with their self-organizing efforts to create spaces where they could express themselves and design their own curriculums and learning activities. Students were the base of my allegiance. I was appointed as the director

of the English department and later the director of the Experiential English Program. Although several Chinese colleagues were assigned to assist me, they showed reluctance to cooperate because of their seniority in terms of longer years served at the school and also because of the heavy teaching load. My proposal included creation of English corners; establishment of an English magazine, edited and written by students; a variety of learning English activities organized by students; one English bulletin board for news and highlights of English activities; and 10 experiential classes. Student leadership brought a noticeable success of the reform. After one semester of implementation, the program created 18 English corners participated by over 900 students. It issued one edition of *Experience*, the first English magazine edited and written by students in the province. There were four experiential courses facilitated by the foreign faculty. The Experiential English Program vitalized school culture as a whole and became highlight of teaching characteristics of IBS.

English corner. To overcome the predicament of an English corner, short-lived and disorganized with random topics, I selected and trained 37 student leaders as the hosts (facilitators) who demonstrated both strong English proficiency and leadership. Based on their self-interests, two student leaders worked together to create their own English corner under a certain topic of choice, cultures, hobbies, sports, entertainment, and movies. We met on a weekly basis to discuss topics and method of facilitating an English corner and make preparations for the following week. Student leaders proposed their ideas and I provided advices when necessary. To recruit members to join in their corner, English hosts reached other students, conducted a survey, and advertised the “characteristics” of their corner. Experiential English was made mandatory to

make sure everyone start speaking English. To avoid the inefficiency of large groups, 18 English corners ran twice a week to divide the total participants into relatively small groups. After attending the English corner, participants were required to write a journal to reflect the issues discussed and provide suggestions to their hosts, who would read through journals and leave a remark. The journal created reflective and communicative spaces for students and their hosts. Running English corners for a large number of students was a tough job. However, through engaging student leadership and their self-initiated organizing efforts, we were able to avoid a chaotic scenario. Participants and hosts worked together to decide the topic, learning activity, and location of their English corner for the coming week. More hosts of English corners were selected and trained when the program started producing a positive result perceived by students.

English corners, involving opinions, politics, and activities, usually generated robust discussions and active participation. Thao Tuan, a very “opinioned” student from Vietnam, fluent in Vietnamese, English and Mandarin, started discussing world politics and social issues at her cultural session, and, later on, problems of school administration and teaching. The heat of the argument and discussion reached at a point that students were spurred to switch to Mandarin in order to have their thoughts fully expressed.

English corners designed to carry out a project also yielded a meaningful result. Xia and her partner facilitated topics under tourism and environmental pollution. Their discussion covered misconducts on campus that were destructive to the image of the university, such as ditching trash. Her group initiated a project of collecting empty water bottles on campus, which is also a service project required by their experiential class of the semester. Xiao was also a

column writer and the assistant layout editor of *Experience*, where she published an article about their project.

Movies that provoked thoughts and reflection engaged students better than purely entertaining ones. Homosexuality was definitely not a legitimate topic recognized by school officials, not in classrooms or offices of student services. As a cultural habit, students tried to avoid direct confrontation of differences in order to keep interpersonal harmony. Consequently, there was lack of understanding of the issue and space for support for students to learn to respect each other. At his corner of English movies, Yin showed *Boys Don't Cry*, directed by Kimberly Peirce, 1999. There was a long period of silence at the end, said Yin. He and his co-facilitator simply let participants leave without any discussion. When students came back in the following week, they had an in-depth discussion about the depression they felt after watching the movie, especially with the knowledge that the movie was made from a real-life story of Brandon Teena. Emotional sharing led to discussions about how a society should treat gays and trans-genders in the light of humanity, respect, and equal rights.

An English corner resembled Public Achievement in several aspects. It engaged self-interests of students and created a space where students got together and started talking about issues that concerned them and learned to share and respect different voices. As the current Communist League branch secretary Fan commented in our meeting in 2014, the English corner created a public place for meaningful relationship-building among students, who would, otherwise, spent the whole night playing computers games at an internet café. Secretary Fan was among the first participants of the Experiential English reform in 2006, when he was a freshman.

He told me that he wished he could have spoken better English back then to be a host since English corners helped to develop a group of excellent student leaders. Similar to Public Achievement, English corners took an organizing approach to empower students to create their own space as a project. It followed Boyte and Kari's idea of "experts on tap, not on top" (1996), an educating approach with which teachers or coaches became resources and students learned to think and act for themselves.

My teaching. It was at my class that Yin watched, for the first time, a serious gender-sexuality related movie, *Boys Don't Cry*. To overcome the tedious drill of listening practice, I introduced a movie once a month that revoked student thoughts of humanistic values, social justice, and cultures. Across the whole campus, the curriculum of College English, lectured by Chinese English teachers, consisted of comprehensive English (vocabulary, grammar, and writing) and listening. The dreary content of text books and the cramming method of teaching led to low attendance of English classes. IBS had to implement a strict attendance rule, according to which students would fail the class with three absences. The ineffectiveness of English teaching was obvious in a big-sized classroom of 40-50 students in average. "English class is hypnotic", remarked by those students who frequently skipped classes. Those students formed at least 40% of freshmen and sophomores enrolled in English classes.

Enlightening students with social justice and new concepts was my mission and also strategy of good teaching. In the tradition of Chinese education, a teacher's role was not only about teaching—imparting knowledge (*jiao shu*), but also about educating (*yu ren*), cultivating minds and hearts and guiding students to explore meanings in their life through personal

examples. Influenced by those teachers who had an impact on me, I followed this tradition. At a 90-minute long English class, I assigned 30 minutes to the discussion of controversial issues that occurred around us.

In 2006, after the death of three local people, including a four-year-old girl, from rabies, Mouding County of Yunnan Province ordered the cull of 50,000 dogs, basically all dogs of the entire county (Watts, 2006). Local media reported, “360 of Mouding county’s 200,000 residents had suffered dog bites this year. Pigs and cows have also been attacked” (Watts, 2006). It stated that the slaughter was “the only way out of bad situation” to “keep this horrible disease from people” (Watts, 2006). Dogs were dragged out from houses of their owners and bludgeoned to death one by one on the designated slaughtering spot, an open area in the village. “Those who attempted to hide their pets indoors were flushed out by late-night squads who made loud noises outside to make the dogs bark” (Watts, 2006). Legal Daily, a newspaper published by central government, criticized the killing as “extraordinarily crude, cold-blooded and lazy way for the government to deal with epidemic disease” (as cited in Watts, 2006).

I had a discussion with some colleagues at the school. They talked in a surprisingly similar tone of Mouding officials, “if dogs are not killed, human beings will die.” I was alert by their lack of sympathy toward animals and the owners and of skepticism about local government’s role. When I talked about this incident at my class, not many students were attentive to this issue. I shared them the official view and my view, and engaged them with questions. I asked students to take an empathetic view in reflecting this issue. If they were the owners, what would be their responses? Some students started talking about humanity, respect

for lives, and co-existence; some tired to explore what could have been done early as effective preventive measures both on the part of residents and local government,; and others related the issue to the cruelty toward animals occurring in their neighborhood. Students that had low interest or poor English skills became participative in the discussion in Mandarin. I wrote translations of key words of their speech as a way to teach vocabulary. The classroom atmosphere was animated by sarcasm, opinions, humor, and different personalities of students. As a result, open classroom culture and in-depth discussions of social issues resulted in high attendance of my English class.

It is interesting to compare my English class with my coaching experience of Public Achievement (PA) at Falcon Heights Elementary School, where I and another college student facilitated a group project, “animal bulling” initiated by students of fifth grade. Different from classroom teaching, my role as a PA coach was to provide guidance to help students work out achievable goals of an issue of their choice. It was up to students to decide the issue of their concern and explain why. After the first meeting, the fifth-grade kids decided to focus on big black dogs (BBD, as they named it). In the following weeks, they divided work and collected data and facts about mistreatment of BBD. Their objective was to establish a website within the school network to educate the rest of students about BBD. Another objective was to develop flyers and have a fair in the community to educate the public and reduce mistreatment of BBD. After discussion of power mapping (identifying potential allies, stakeholders, and protocols of approaching people) and through their collaborative efforts, kids fulfilled these two objectives. They presented their BBD project together with other groups in front of the mayor at the city

council meeting of Falcon Heights, attended by council members, parents, and other community residents. It was an achievement of public values.

Public Achievement enables students, as young as kids, to not only talk about issues, but also act on it. It teaches citizen politics through asking key questions that shaped civic studies, what is right (values), what is going on (facts), and what would work (strategies) (Levine, 2013). I have to admit that the “acting” part is missing in my teaching, which, therefore, lacks the dimension of public work that underlines Public Achievement. Simply through reflecting values, my teaching has the limitation in helping students to connect their self-interest to public work and develop collective agency to initiate a change. Education is regarded as an important work of transforming human personality, disposition, and ability to act for a better society. To advance this tradition and to firmly consolidate significance associated with the role of an educator, citizen politics must be taught.

Experience English magazine. The idea of establishing an English magazine was to develop students’ ownership of a school publication, where they could express their true voices and tell their stories as a way to vitalize learning culture. The magazine provided participatory opportunities for students who were not good at oral English but competent in written English. It also served as a good platform for collective work of designing, writing, editing, interviewing, and photography. Each edition of the magazine was a project of collaborative efforts. To help students develop professionalism in editing and critical thinking, I asked Jared Hall, a young English teacher from America and majored in journalism, to co-supervise student’s work. He opened journalism as an elective course and also provided training of Microsoft Publisher to the

layout team. In public work, training was important for participants to become capable and productive.

As English teachers, we enjoyed the convenience to recruit students who showed different interests in creating an English magazine. However, to make sure student's central role in the magazine, Jared and I had multiple discussions with students at the initial phase, regarding questions of how the magazine was going to look like, what they would like to put in there, and who might be good for a certain position. Eventually, students worked out the content of the magazine, consisting of the following parts: News, Academic, Opinions, Lifestyle, and Interview. Students thought their experience and voices were important and should be the focus of the magazine. They named the magazine *Experience*.

Katherine Yang and Jacqueline Du were hired as content editors. After attending Jared's journalism class, they became excellent column writers. Katherine was responsible for writing and collecting articles from students for news, academic and opinions, and Jacqueline was in charge of lifestyle, including movie reviews, fashion, sports, and traveling. They both helped to do the firsthand proofreading before all the articles were submitted to Jared and other foreign teachers for the final check. Some members of content team were also the hosts of English corners. They played an important role to select good journals or encourage students in their group to write a piece of their opinions to the magazine.

The layout and content teams worked closely to put everything together, articles, pictures and design, to make sure the magazine appeared refreshing and appealing to the majority of students. Ryan Zhang, a very shy student, hardworking and shrewd in computer skills

and image processing, was hired as one of the editor of layout team. After two years of working with the editing team, he developed an interest in learning English, passed Band 4 of College English Test (CET4), and above all, became outspoken and active in team work. He also worked with another student to find sponsorship for publishing the magazine.

Instead being paid, students volunteered to work for *Experience*. They were passionate about doing the work where they were able to express themselves, make major decisions, grow professionally, and have influences in shaping the campus culture. After the first edition came out in the fall of 2006, the content of *Experience* was displayed on the bulletin board, noticeable to people outside of IBS. Katherine Yang was approached by several students from other schools of the university, who showed a strong interest in working for *Experience*. Although Dean Liu indicated that membership had to stay within the school, we broke the wall of “turf battles” of the administrative hierarchy and secretly hired five students outside IBS, one from School of Communication, and four from School of Foreign Languages.

In 2007, with four editions published, *Experience* gained remarkable recognition. Dr. Michael Hwang, the administrative chancellor of Chinese campuses (Keuka China Programs), highly spoke of the magazine as an innovative way of learning at many occasions. He proposed to expand *Experience* to all campuses of Keuka China programs as the main publication of experiential education so that students from different campuses and cities in China could share their stories and experiences. He would fund the magazine and pay for student workers. Dr. Hwang was influential in the circle of Chinese higher education with his work of promoting “learning by doing” represented by his book *Career Management – Experiential Learning*. The

expansion would lead to a cultural movement of student-centered education, showing great potential for a variety of ways of teaching public work and development of collective agency. The proposal, however, was rejected by Dean Liu in the end. He thought it was better to focus on our own students and keep the magazine within our school. This decision led to a morale decline among students, who were passionate about their role and potential of producing and creating a work that was meaningful to their peers and their environment.

The school administration. In general, the school administration showed support for the reform as an innovative teaching and learning method of English. Mr. Zhu, the Party secretary of the school, who oversaw the political work of the Party, showed his concern about the right viewpoints of students, especially in a written document. At the weekly Party-and-administration meeting, he suggested me to keep a loose eye on student's work and guide them toward correct consciousness. Dean Liu, the most authoritative figure of the school, however, suggested a loose rule with English learning activities. In his words: "English teaching and learning are different, we should allow some flexibility." Dean Liu recognized the importance of engaging students' personality and self-interest to create a dynamic learning atmosphere. As a result, radical elements in the Experiential English reform had not been scrutinized strictly by the propaganda departments under the Party. It was noteworthy that students were open for and interested in diverse topics and politics, especially issues occurring in their surroundings. Not a single student wrote a note to the dean or visited him in the office to complain about the inappropriateness of topics discussed in the Experiential English program or my teaching.

Evaluation

Flexibility enjoyed by English learning and teaching gave room for creation of free spaces, where students started talking in depth about issues that concerned them, and some worked collaboratively to build significant projects. The success of the Experiential English reform can be attributed to the engagement of students' self-interest and leadership, development of meaningful student-teacher relationships, professional training, strategies of getting the support from key stakeholders (the school authority, the majority of students as participants), and free spaces allowed in the program. Those are key elements of operating a successful Public Achievement program.

In Public Achievement, power is an important concept. It directly relates to the strategy to make things happen. The skills and knowledge of developing strategies are called power mapping, which include three conceptual points listed in *Building Worlds, Transforming Lives, Making History: A Guide to Public Achievement* (Center for Democracy and Citizenship 1998): interest—any number of potential allies, their interests, strategies to enlist the support of stakeholders and resources that can tap into; power—questions of who is impacted by the problem; what kind of power the stakeholders have, and how more power can be accessed; and rules—knowledge and understanding of the culture of a particular stakeholder, rules and protocol of gathering information.

The experiential English reform serves as a concrete example of how free spaces can be created at a Chinese college campus. The significance attached to a teacher in shaping students, including the formation of their attitudes, dispositions and personality, laid the

foundation for integrating civicism in his or her daily teaching. Given by the multiple functions attached to teaching and the emphasis of a meaningful teacher-student relationship, Chinese teachers are a powerful hidden curriculum to engage students with civic thinking and action. The Experiential English reform demonstrates that releasing students' power through delegation and empowerment can lead to a collaborative achievement of revitalization of campus culture and effective knowledge learning. More transformative impact and civic energy could be produced if the concept of civic studies, with the focus on developing agency through public work, was incorporated in the program.

Conclusion

In a celebrity-driven culture and power-money dominated society, modern China is in danger of losing its tradition of collective agency. While experts and education administrator formulate policies to reinforce the political-moral education at different levels of the school system, young people are further alienated from their goals. The prevalent assumption about civic education is that it is a work of fixing problems exhibited by the young people.

Compared to the static and stifling atmosphere of institutions, netizens actively participate in Wechat and Weibo, sharing their political views and well-written articles. They show high-quality critique, questing about systematic flaws of Chinese society and social injustice. The new citizens in China are emerging.

May 2016, Netizens demanded justification for the death of Lei Yang, a well-educated environmentalist, who died after plainclothes officers detained him outside a Beijing foot massage parlor, a common euphemism for a brothel. As a reaction to the police's charge of Lei's

involvement in prostitution, a netizen wrote, “Lei Yang is dead. I don’t care what his job was, or what his political views were... I just care that he’s dead and that he died while being detained” (Tatlow, 2016). Strongly worded petitions appeared, with one titled “*We Must Speak Out — Statement by Some 1988 Alumni of Renmin University of China on Fellow Student Lei Yang’s Death*” (Tatlow, 2016).

Shadow spaces, birth places of democracy, exist in every aspect of social life and a school system and show a growing influence in Chinese society. It is of great importance to accommodate rising angers and awakening civic consciousness of the public into the work of developing civic professionals for constructing sustainable democracy. The dynamic of education in and for democracy must take place in many settings (Boyte, 2016).

In 2011, in an interview about the Chinese government’s frightened reaction to the Arab Spring, Hillary Clinton responded, “Well, they are. They’re worried, and they are trying to stop history, which is a fool’s errand. They cannot do it. But they’re going to hold it off as long as possible.” Referring to China’s human rights record as “deplorable” and questioning the long-term viability of the one-party system, Hilary Clinton regarded the future of the Chinese system was doomed (Goldberg, 2011).

It is apparent that Ms. Clinton looked at the Chinese system with her American liberal attitude. Configuring Chinese democracy as collective agency and examining its culture and tradition in the context of civic studies provide a promising and constructive perspective to prove Clinton’s prophecy wrong. More significantly, revitalization of the tradition of collective agency, the capacity of collaborative actions, encompassing values, skills, and political acumen, will

serve as a powerful force to counteract the impact of modern challenges that China is undergoing. Once it opens the door for democratic renewal, China will demonstrate great prospect for constructing democracy as a better way of life through the Confucian emphasis of superiority of the humanity rule over the rule of technology and rigid system and the Chinese socialists' vision and belief in the collective power of the ordinary people and their democratic experiments. More discussions and studies are needed to examine practices of citizen politics in different settings of education (work, schools, community life) through creating free spaces as the laboratory of public work and development of civic agents to enrich the theoretical work of this dissertation—to seek truth from facts.

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